THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION VOL. 11 NO. 9 OCTOBE

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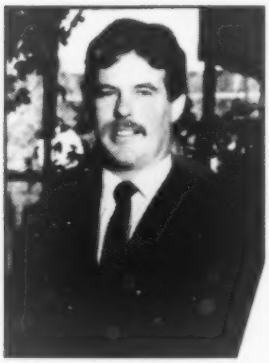

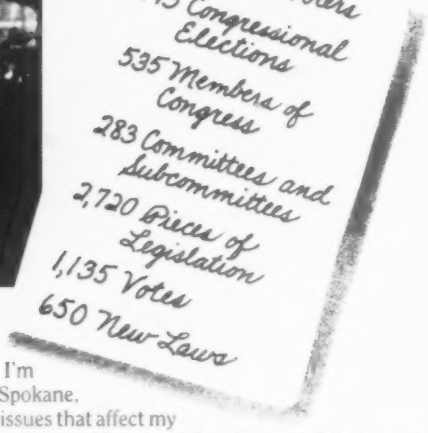

My name is John McKinney. I'm a restaurant operator in Spokane, Washington. I care about a lot of issues that affect my industry, my job and my family – issues like teen labor laws, social security taxes on tips, parental and medical leave, and food safety. Congress addresses these issues every day and I want lawmakers to understand my concerns. But as just one voter, I can't be sure my views are seriously considered.

That's why I contribute to the National Restaurant Association Political Action Committee (NRA-PAC). Together with other foodservice operators, I strengthen my voice in the political process. NRA-PAC keeps me informed about the issues that have an impact on me and lets me know where the candidates stand on these issues. I join with others who care about promoting free enterprise and a strong economy. We combine our resources to support candidates who share our concerns and will fight for us in Congress. Our views get heard.

As an operator of one of the nation's 650,000 foodservice establishments, I'm proud to belong to NRA-PAC. It's the best way I know to affect the issues that affect me.

Political Action Committees:
My Choice for a Stronger Voice

For more information, call NRA-PAC at (800)424-5156.

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Marketing Executives
10/16–19 San Diego, CA

Foodservice Purchasing Managers
10/23–24 Denver, CO

Quality Assurance
10/23–25 St. Louis, MO

Multiunit Environmental Affairs Officers
11/6–8 San Diego, CA

For more information on specific study groups, contact Rosemary Curtis at (312) 853-2525.

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10/21 (half-day program)
10/22 (half-day program)

Tips & Tools for Training
10/29 (half-day program)

Current Legal Issues
11/18 (full-day program)

SERVSAFE Responsible Alcohol Service
11/19 (full-day program)

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all seminars are held in the Educational Foundation's conference center at 250 South Wacker Drive in Chicago.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

John R. Farquharson, president
ARASERVE, Philadelphia, PA

Restaurateurs take their case to Congress

Restaurateurs all across the country have returned to their businesses feeling energized about our industry after spending a successful three days at the National Restaurant Association's 1991 Public Affairs Conference. This year the theme was "Take Your Case to Congress," and we certainly lived up to that motto.

A record number of states, 47, were represented at this annual event, held September 23–25 in Washington DC. Nearly 430 restaurant operators learned what makes Washington tick and how to become a vocal partner in the legislative process.

In addition, restaurateurs held more than 340 face-to-face meetings with members of Congress, the most contacts we've ever made in the seven-year history of the Public Affairs Conference. The meetings were the cornerstone of the event, giving us the opportunity to offer individual representatives and senators the restaurateur's view of issues such as FICA taxes, mandated health and family-leave benefits, teen-employment rules, minimum wage and OSHA regulations.

Our efforts on the first day of the conference led to an unexpected victory on the teen-labor front. Restaurateurs helped to convince Rep. Charles Schumer (D–NY) to drop his proposal to make certain child-labor violations subject to criminal penalties, including jail terms. The situation remains volatile, however, and a similar proposal could surface again.

The opening night included the always-elegant *Chef d'oeuvre* congressional reception on Capitol Hill. Members of Congress and conference participants chatted informally while sampling fare from some of Washington's elite restaurants. It was a great chance to meet informally with the men and women who have such an important hand in our businesses.

More progress on FICA repeal

Among the foodservice-related news from Capitol Hill last month were developments on the timely issue of FICA-tax repeal.

So far, 198 members of the House and 33 members of the Senate have agreed to sponsor the repeal legislation. Much of the credit for the increase in cosponsors can be given to association members who pushed FICA repeal during district meetings in August.

September board meeting

At the association's board meeting that preceded the Public Affairs Conference, directors decided to produce a tabloid newspaper that would be mailed to guidance counselors in the 17,500 public high schools

across the nation. The newspaper would be filled with stories about the growth of the foodservice industry and the job opportunities it provides. The paper would also include features on successful restaurateurs and innovative educational programs.

Too many people who advise students on careers know little or nothing about the foodservice career ladder, new degree programs and scholarships that make foodservice a great field for students. This newspaper will carry a positive message about our industry to guidance counselors in every state.

Challenge fund meets goal

This month, the Educational Foundation announced that the Challenge Fund endowment campaign met its first-year goal by raising more than $2.5 million. Foundation president Dan Gescheidle attributes the success to the tremendous support of association and foundation board members. The challenge, though, is just beginning.

The Challenge Fund is now entering its second phase, which is to gain commitments outside of the board families. Continued support will be needed to reach the Foundation's three-year goal of increasing the endowment to $10 million. Contributions fund the development of new educational programs and increase scholarship opportunities for hospitality students.

Large Independent Operators Group seeks members

Earlier this month, members of the association's Large Independent Operators (LIO) Group met in Philadelphia. The group heard presentations on the critical role of family-owned businesses in the economy and the importance of marketing the menu. Members of the group own restaurants that generate about $1 million per unit annually. For information on joining this group, contact Rosemary Curtis in the Chicago office at (312) 853-2525.

I'd like to welcome the 64 new members who joined the association during the past month. Your participation in the association's programs and your interest in our activities will help to improve both your restaurant and the association.

Sincerely,

John R. Farquharson
President and Chairman of the Board

COVER STORY

TURNING TABLES WHEN THE RUSH IS ON

15 Serving customers efficiently in a busy restaurant is one of a restaurateur's most pleasant challenges. There's nothing like a calm, calculated system to handle a frantic rush with ease. Read how one Manhattan restaurant turns tables speedily.

SPECIALS

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Restaurateurs are unanimous in their fight to repeal this tax that is damaging the bottom line.

20 **Do you have a cost of sales problem?**
An industry expert walks managers through the steps of solving the cost-of-sales puzzle.

24 **Savor the squash**
Squash is squeezing its way back into favor, adding flavor and variety to menus year-round.

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Some restaurant operators are brewing up business during downtime by heating up the ritual of afternoon tea.

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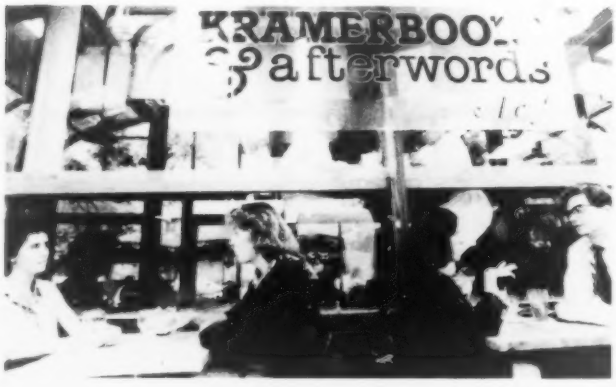
These successful cafe operators encourage their customers to read at the table.

33 **Conducting meetings**
Take a moment to meet with this foodservice consultant's ideas on orchestrating productive business meetings.



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Front and back cover photos by Gary Landsman.

Lake Charles chefs cook up a "Show for Life"

The sights, sounds and tastes of New Orleans moved west about 200 miles on September 14, when chefs and musicians gathered in Lake Charles, Louisiana, to put on the 15th annual "Show for Life" benefit for the American Cancer Society.

A mixture of jazz, Cajun and rhythm-and-blues music spiced up an evening already well-seasoned by the culinary efforts of Louisiana chefs who cooked for a good cause: research that can lead to the cure and prevention of cancer.

Tastes of Louisiana were furnished by participating chefs from the City Club, the Pioneer Club, Cafe Margaux, Chateau Nouveau, Chateau Charles, the Boarding House, Lake Charles Country Club and Sowela Technical Institute.

Puckett's Photography

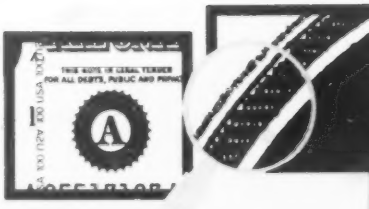
Cashiers (and crooks) take note

Restaurateurs and other retailers who conduct business with big bills may have an easier time identifying counterfeit money in coming years.

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which is responsible for printing all U.S. currency, has begun issuing $50 and $100 bills with two new security features. The new bills have a polyester strip embedded in them with the letters "USA 50" or "USA 100." The strip is located on the left side of the note's face and is printed in an alternating up-and-down pattern. In addition, the words "The United States of America" have been printed repeatedly along the sides of the portrait on the face of the bill. The letters are so tiny they appear like a thin line to the naked eye.

In the future, when you suspect one of your patrons is trying to pass funny money, simply hold it up to the light to check for the polyester strip and use a magnifying glass to read the microprinted words around the portrait. However, these precautions can be used only for $50 and $100 bills from the 1990 series and beyond. Over the next five years, the new security features will be included on newly printed $20, $10 and $5 bills.

The Department of the Treasury has introduced these features because they cannot be easily reproduced by advanced photocopying equipment or printers.



New security features for big bills: embedded strip with "USA 50" or "USA 100," visible only when held up to the light (left), and microprinting on sides of portrait, visible only with a magnifier. The new features spell trouble for counterfeiters who use advanced photocopiers to print funny money.

Pizza recipes available

Thirteen chefs from across the nation contributed pizza recipes to a booklet available free of charge from the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board.

As pizza grows in popularity (see story, page 42), more restaurateurs are adding it to their menus or spicing up old standby pizza offerings. Now, a new booklet can give your pizza recipes more pizzazz.

The 20-page, full-color booklet features recipes from 13 of the nation's most prestigious pizza chefs, who gathered at the recent Wisconsin Cheese Pizza Chef Showcase in Chicago. Recipes range from spicy Tex-Mex breakfast pizza to tropical jerk-chicken pizza with mango salsa.

Recipes in the booklet emphasize the use of more than just traditional pizza cheeses such as mozzarella, Parmesan and Romano. Lesser-known Muenster and fontina as well as exotic Taleggio, Asiago and Havarti are among the alternative tempting toppers.

This pizza recipe booklet is available free of charge. To order, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Pizza Recipe Booklet, Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, 8418 Excelsior Drive, Madison, WI 53717.

A hotter mode of delivery?

Domino's Pizza is well known for delivering its hot pizzas via cars, bicycles and scooters. Might the company switch to solar-powered delivery someday?

Recognizing the need to develop alternative energy sources that are less harmful to the environment, Domino's Pizza cosponsored the design and construction of a solar-powered race car known as Sunrunner.

Built by a 140-member student team from the University of Michigan, Sunrunner won first place in the 1990 General Motors Sunrayce USA by covering 1,641 miles in 72 hours, 50 minutes and 47 seconds. The car was also entered in the 1990 World Solar Challenge in Australia, where it placed third in an international field of 36.

Domino's Pizza and other sponsors have donated the solar-powered race car known as Sunrunner to the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan.

Talking trash

Restaurateurs trying to rid their establishments of ugly, overflowing trash receptacles might consider a new talking, animated friend to help them.

The Trash Thing, created by Automated Fluid Systems of Dayton, Ohio, is a trash can with a difference. A colorful cartoon character decorates the exterior of the low-density compactor, which can compact 10 times the trash volume of conventional disposable trash bags. An automated voice box built into the unit says, "Feed me, I'm hungry," every two minutes and "Yum, yum, thank you," when trash is deposited. The audio and visual appeal of the Trash Thing had kids lining up to toss trash into its mouth during early marketing tests in several McDonald's, according to Bud Thomson, spokesperson for Automated Fluid Systems.

The company hopes to market the Trash Thing in high-traffic areas where large quantities of food are served, such as fast food restaurants, shopping-mall food courts and amusement parks.

The Trash Thing's creators hope that the talking product will motivate customers to discover the fun of tossing trash.

States grapple with drunk-driving laws

How much can a person drink before being too drunk to drive? It is a question scientists have been trying to answer for decades.

Today, state legislators are trying to further answer this question by stiffening legal definitions of intoxication, particularly with respect to driving. A measurement known as "blood alcohol content" (BAC) is used to determine whether a driver has been impaired by the amount of alcohol he or she has consumed. In most states, driving with a blood alcohol content of .10 is an illegal act. But in the past few years, there has been a movement in state legislatures across the country to lower that level to .08.

Currently, five states—California, Maine, Oregon, Utah and Vermont—have declared .08 to be the threshold of legality for alcohol in the bloodstream. Since the beginning of this year, at least 19 other states have considered lowering their "per se" BAC standards from .10 to .08. New federal grant standards currently under consideration may encourage cash-strapped states to go to .08.

The hospitality industry has traditionally opposed legislation to lower the legal BAC, on the grounds that such an action is a narrow response to broader societal problems. Statistics have shown that most alcohol-related traffic fatalities are brought about by drivers whose BAC levels exceed current standards by quite a bit and that the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities does not decrease when the BAC is lower. But opposing the lowering of the legal blood alcohol content can carry a tremendous price tag, as restaurateurs in New Hampshire discovered this past spring.

The New Hampshire debate

Blood alcohol content was first an issue in New Hampshire during the 1989-90 legislative session. A hotly debated bill was defeated in the spring of 1990 by the grassroots lobbying efforts of area restaurateurs. Support for lowering the threshold to .08, however, continued to grow in the state, at the urging of groups such as the New Hampshire Safety Council, the New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving. The governor then appointed a task force whose report was the jumping-off point for this year's proposed BAC legislation.

"We supported all of the task force's bills except the .08," says Tim Fortier, the New Hampshire Hospitality Association's Government Affairs manager. "We demonstrated our commitment to clearing the highways of drunk drivers, but we didn't feel .08 addressed that. The .08 bill was a superficial attempt to deal with drunk driving. It didn't focus on the real problems of polyusers [those under the influence of both drugs and alcohol], underage drinkers and repeat offenders."

The New Hampshire BAC bill arrived in the state Senate in April, where several votes registered the elected officials' inclination to table the bill. But editorial pressure from the statewide newspaper and political pressure from a prominent state senator encouraged further hearings on the bill.

Pivotal testimony from alcohol servers at the first hearing led to awareness of the restaurant industry's view of the drunk-driving problem. "The news articles focused on the problems we all have when someone on the road is drunk. But the media coverage really did not discuss the plight of the server: what kind of training the server has had, what kind of liability there is, how difficult it can be to identify an impaired patron. The hearing was the first time the legislators heard the server's voice clearly," Fortier says.

As a result, a sympathetic senator introduced an amendment to absolve servers of responsibility for patrons who had up to a .12 BAC level. His good intentions, however, muddied the bill, and the Senate eventually rejected the compromise. "We appreciated the senator's recognition that the responsibility belongs to the drinker, not the server," Fortier says.

State association takes heat

Proponents of the bill reacted to the New Hampshire Hospitality Association's (NHHA) opposition with a full-scale negative media campaign. A local newspaper columnist called the industry "greedy" for its concerns about costs (in the forms of tax losses and judicial expenses). And hospitality industry grassroots efforts were dismissed as big-money lobbying.

Editorials accused the restaurateurs of wanting

States may continue to feel pressure

Currently, federal law allows states to be eligible for federal grants when they implement programs to reduce traffic-safety problems caused by drunk drivers. This grant program allows states to receive funds without lowering the legal BAC level.

But Sen. Dick Bryan (D-NV) has proposed legislation to change that program. New requirements for a grant would include

- creation and operation of highway sobriety checkpoints;
- utilization of video equipment to detect and prosecute drunk drivers;
- .10 per se BAC level for the first three years of the grant, lowered to .08 for the remaining two years;
- mandatory sentencing for drunk drivers of 48 hours in prison or 100 hours of community service, plus 90-day license suspension;
- and creation of a drunk-driving program that is financially self-sustaining through collection of fines and penalties.

Supplemental funds would be available to states that increased enforcement of underage-drinking prohibitions, revoked car registrations from repeat offenders and created "open container" laws, among other things. States could obtain additional funds for changing their legal BAC level to .08 immediately.

This bill was reported out of the Senate Commerce Committee unanimously. It passed the Senate by voice vote on July 7 and has been added to the Senate version of the highway bill. In the House of Representatives, the future of a related bill remains unclear.

"the right to to be able to serve impaired drivers," while another claimed the hospitality industry would make the state a refuge for drunks too scared to drive in neighboring states with .08 laws.

"We wanted very much to respond, but we did not want to give the press more opportunities and ammunition. It was very difficult. Our directors were fuming over the papers' allegations," Fortier says.

After the legislation was defeated, the NHHA decided to speak out. In a June press release, Terry Wentworth, the owner/manager of the Red Parka Pub and the Legislative Affairs chairperson of the NHHA, described the hospitality industry's long-term commitment to serving alcohol responsibly.

"The state's hospitality industry is in the business of responsible alcohol service. Otherwise, we would be placing ourselves and the lives of our employees at great risk when we travel the roads at night after closing our business. We don't make it our business, nor is it good business, to serve patrons excessively," she said.

Lessons learned

The BAC battle is far from over in New Hampshire, but many lessons have been learned.

"Nothing we could do would have helped us avoid the media problem completely. But we look forward to working more closely with the task force and legislators for compromise legislation that helps discourage drunk driving and that incorporates the industry viewpoint," says Fortier.

—*Linda Way*

INS cracks down on employers

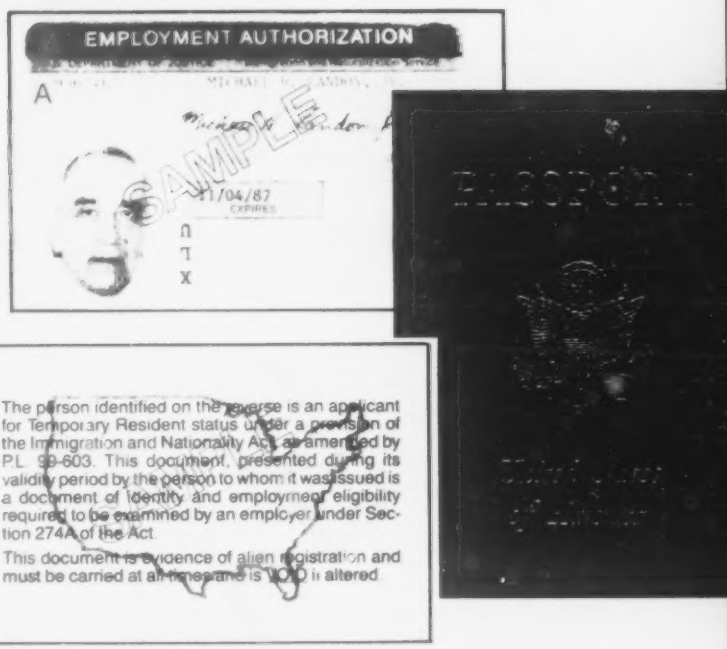
The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has accelerated enforcement of a 1986 law that requires employers to make sure each employee they hire is eligible to work in the United States.

In 1986, faced with a rising tide of illegal immigrants entering the country, the U.S. Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act. By threatening employers with fines and possible jail terms for hiring unauthorized workers, lawmakers hoped to discourage illegal workers from crossing the border by making it tougher for them to get jobs.

To give the INS a paper trail to help track down illegal workers and their employers, Congress required employers to complete paperwork verifying each employee's identity and eligibility to work.

Pointing out that the law is almost five years old and that employers have had enough time to understand their responsibilities, INS commissioner Gene McNary this spring ordered investigators to crack down on employers who violate the law. Under the new policy, INS agents no longer have to warn violators—even those who have committed minor paperwork violations—before assessing a fine.

INS officials say they are focusing on employers who knowingly hire and employ illegal workers. However, the National Restaurant Association has begun to hear reports from foodservice operators that the INS crackdown is resulting in thousands of dollars in fines for restaurateurs and other employers with sloppy paperwork—even though these employers have not knowingly hired any illegal workers.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The person identified on the reverse is an applicant for Temporary Resident status under a provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended by P.L. 99-603. This document, presented during its validity period by the person to whom it was issued is a document of identity and employment eligibility required to be examined by an employer under Section 274A of the Act.
This document is evidence of alien registration and must be carried at all times and is void if altered.

Although employers argue that issuing steep fines for relatively minor paperwork errors is excessive, the INS is authorized to fine, and is fining, employers for paperwork violations. This crackdown sends a clear signal to all foodservice operators: Make sure INS paperwork is complete and up to date for every employee.

Raids find paperwork violations

Paperwork violations make up the bulk of the violations that INS agents find.

From October 1989 (when the INS began keeping detailed statistics on violations) to March 1991, INS statistics show that 90 percent of violations involved employers who failed to complete an entire *Employment Eligibility Verification Form* (I-9 form) for each employee, as required by the 1986 law.

This trend has continued since commissioner McNary issued his new enforcement policy April 5, 1991. INS data for investigations conducted from April through July (INS's latest statistics) show that 92 percent of employer violations involved faulty I-9s.

One of the businesses the INS inspected this year was the Sugar Bowl Ice Cream Parlor in Scottsdale, Arizona, owned by Carroll and Tamara Huntress. Acting on a tip from a disgruntled ex-employee of the Sugar Bowl, INS agents in Arizona inspected the restaurant in May. Investigators found no illegal workers at the restaurant, but discovered problems with 22 of the business's 30 I-9 forms. In July the INS served the restaurant notice that it owed $6,500 in penalties for numerous omissions and inaccuracies on the 22 forms.

Carroll Huntress explains that he regrets that he pushed the paperwork to the side in the rush of operating his restaurant. "We are a mom-and-pop shop. I am the personnel director, advertising manager, floor manager, you name it. There are so many details in a small shop like ours to take care of," he says.

Although Huntress admit-

ted he was sloppy with the paperwork, he disputed the size of the fine. "There should have been a fine to make a point, but the fine they wanted was totally outrageous," he says. "If we had hired illegal workers, then sure, let us have it. But I had 15 forms that were filled out wrong the exact same way. It's not fair to be penalized for the same mistake 15 times."

Huntress and his wife were able to negotiate the fine down to $3,250 by arguing they had made a good-faith, though imperfect, effort to comply with the law and by pleading that the loss of $6,500 would be an extreme hardship for their two-unit small business, which Huntress says barely skimmed a three percent profit margin last year.

Huntress advises his fellow restaurateurs to pay attention to details when filling out I-9 forms and to fill in every single space completely. "I didn't realize that the INS was going to put everything under a microscope and pick out every little thing that was wrong," he says.

New policy relies on fines

Until this year, the INS had instructed its agents to warn employers after first-time violations and to reinforce the warnings by educating employers about their responsibilities. Commissioner McNary's April directive waived the education-first policy and instructed investigators to fine even first-time violators.

McNary told INS agents to devote more of their time

How to comply with immigration law

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 prohibits all employers from

- ☐ knowingly hiring any illegal aliens, which includes not only actual knowledge but also knowledge that may be reasonably inferred by noticing suspicious facts and circumstances;
- ☐ hiring any person without completing an *Employment Eligibility Verification Form* (the I-9 form); and
- ☐ continuing to employ an alien who is discovered to be an illegal alien or whose eligibility to work has expired.

Verifying that workers are eligible

Employers must complete an I-9 form for each person hired on or after November 7, 1986. Employers must

- ☐ make sure employees fill out personal information required on the I-9 form (a preparer or translator may help the employee fill out this section, if necessary);
- ☐ examine documents that establish employees' identity and eligibility to work;
- ☐ properly complete and sign the I-9 form themselves;
- ☐ retain the I-9 form (or a copy on microfilm or microfiche) for at least 3 years or until 1 year after the person stops working for the employer, whichever is later;
- ☐ present the I-9 for inspection to an INS or Department of Labor officer upon request (you must be given at least 3 days' advance notice).

Employee documents

Within 3 days of the date of hire, an employee must present to the employer documents to prove his or her identity and work authorization.

Some documents establish both identity and employment eligibility. Other documents establish identity alone or employment eligibility alone. An employer cannot specify which document or documents a person must present, but must see sufficient documents to verify both the employee's identity and employment eligibility.

When completing the I-9 form, the employer must write down the document identification number and expiration date (if any) in the appropriate space on the I-9 for each document an employee provides. Employers need to keep track of each employee's work eligibility to make sure it does not expire. The National Restaurant Association recommends that employers set up a tickler file system to remind managers of when each worker's eligibility document is scheduled to expire.

Unfair employment practices

Employers of four or more persons are prohibited from discriminating against a person (other than an illegal alien) because of the person's national origin or citizenship status. The employer may not

- ☐ request "more or different documents" than those that are required under the law;
- ☐ refuse to honor "documents tendered that on their face reasonably appear to be genuine"; or
- ☐ intimidate, threaten or retaliate against any individual for filing a discrimination complaint or for participating in an investigation, proceeding or hearing.

The law permits employers to hire a U.S. citizen or national over an alien if the two persons are equally qualified.

Penalties for paperwork violations

Operators who fail to comply with the employment-eligibility verification requirements of the law will be ordered by the INS to pay a civil penalty of $100 to $1,000 for each worker to whom such violation applies.

Penalties for hiring violations

Operators who knowingly hire an illegal alien, or continue to employ an illegal worker while knowing that he or she is or has become illegal, will be ordered by the INS to fire the worker and pay a civil penalty of

- ☐ $250 to $2,000 per illegal alien for a first violation;
- ☐ $2,000 to $5,000 per illegal alien for a second violation; and
- ☐ $3,000 to $10,000 per illegal alien if there have been two or more prior violations.

Violators who exhibit a pattern or practice of knowingly hiring or continuing to employ illegal aliens will be ordered to pay a fine of up to $3,000 for each illegal alien and/or will be imprisoned for up to 6 months.

Penalties for discrimination

An employer who violates the anti-discrimination provisions of the law will be ordered to stop the

to enforcing the 1986 law, rather than trying to root out criminal aliens or deter document fraud. He also asked investigators to concentrate on leads from customers, employees, captured illegal aliens and other sources to ferret out employers not complying with the law. Before the new policy, the INS had relied more heavily on random audits of employers to catch violators.

discrimination and may be required to pay a civil penalty of

□ $250 to $2,000 for each person discriminated against for a first violation;

□ $2,000 to $5,000 for each person discriminated against for a second violation; and

□ $3,000 to $10,000 for each person discriminated against if there have been two or more prior violations.

The INS may also instruct employers to take preventive measures, such as educating managers about the law's requirements and posting notices to inform employees about their rights and their employer's obligations.

Employers with more than one establishment

For employers with distinct, physically separate subdivisions, each of which handles its own hiring, each subdivision is considered a separate employer for the purposes of IRCA.

However, in an important pending federal case, a multiunit restaurant company is disputing one instance where the INS treated two separate units of the parent company as one employer when assessing civil penalties—even though each unit did its own hiring.

McNary said the INS will continue to educate employers about the law, offering copies of the INS's *Handbook for Employers* and leading seminars for employers. Meanwhile investigators will press ahead to punish violators. "Voluntary compliance remains our objective, but willful violators of the law will be punished," he said.

McNary said he will reevaluate the costs and benefits of placing enforcement priority on employer sanctions. But despite employer complaints, INS officials now say the new policy of issuing fines instead of warnings is most likely here to stay.

Common mistakes on the I-9

INS officials have noticed that employers often make several common errors when filling out I-9 forms. Robert Elder, employer and labor-relations coordinator for the INS's Washington DC district office, offers the following tips to help employers avoid mistakes.

□ *Make sure employees write down their personal information and sign and date the I-9.* The employer must make sure every employee correctly writes in his or her name, address, date of birth and Social Security number; checks the box stating whether he or she is a U.S. citizen or an alien authorized to work in the United States; and signs and dates the form.

Restaurateur Carroll Huntress, for example, says he was fined in part because several employees wrote down the current date in the space reserved for their birth date. "The employer must review the employee section of the form to make sure it is completed. And if the employee forgot or didn't understand, it is the employer's responsibility to make sure that the employee dates and signs the form," says Elder.

□ *Examine documents carefully, and write down document numbers and expiration dates.* Operators must verify each worker's identity and work eligibility by examining documents provided by the employee. The employer must check the correct boxes on the I-9 to show which documents were presented. In addition, document numbers and expiration dates for each document must be recorded.

"Many employers start off the I-9 form pretty well but omit Social Security numbers and other document numbers and forget to check the correct box to show whether the document being used is a Social Security card, a driver's license or something else," says Elder.

Huntress, for example, was cited for 15 instances of omitting document numbers and expiration dates.

□ *Sign and date the form.* Employers themselves must sign and date the I-9 form and keep it on file for inspection.

To avoid mistakes, Elder recommends that employers sit down with new workers immediately after hiring to complete the I-9. That way the employer will find out early about any problem that makes the employee ineligible to work, he says.

New employer handbook and I-9 coming out

Employers may find it easier to complete I-9 forms after November 21, when the INS says it will issue a redesigned I-9 form as well as a revised version of its *Handbook for Employers*.

Isaiah Russell, head of employer and labor relations in the INS's Washington DC headquarters, says that the I-9 and the handbook are being revised to make them easier for employers and employees to understand and to implement relatively minor changes in the law's regulations that go into effect November 21, 1991.

Russell says changes in the I-9 form are likely to include more space for employers to keep track of workers' document numbers and expiration dates. The new handbook will provide a revised list of documents employees can use to prove their identity and work eligibility.

The new I-9 form and handbook will not be available until after November 21. Employers may still use the old version of the I-9 after the new form is issued.

For immediate answers to specific questions about the 1986 law, employers can call the INS's employer and labor-relations headquarters in Washington DC at (202) 514-2471 or contact their local INS employer-relations office, listed under U.S. Government in the phone book.

For recorded general information about the 1986 law and its paperwork requirements, operators can call the INS's toll-free hotline at (800) 755-0777.

—Andrew McLauchlin

FICA TAX ON TIPS
IS DAMAGING YOUR BOTTOM LINE

by Pat DiDomenico

Since the mid-1940s, the Ritacco family has operated First Edition, a seafood and pasta restaurant in Bayside, New York. Like any restaurant, the popular family eatery has endured occasional slumps. Yet First Edition has always bounced back to enjoy the more prosperous times.

But these days, more than ever before, owner Robert Ritacco says he fears for the survival of the family business.

Each year since 1988, Ritacco has helplessly watched as $20,000 of would-be profit (nearly half of First Edition's $42,000 net income) is siphoned away from his small business. The missing money is cutting deep into his already razor-thin 4 percent profit margin.

The spent money has not gone toward creation of new menu items, hiring more workers nor starting up training programs. First Edition's $20,000, and millions more dollars from other American restaurateurs, have been snatched away by the federal government each year as part of a 1987 law that requires employers to pay Social Security (FICA) tax on all tips.

"The numbers I have are typical. I can't see how any other restaurateur is avoiding serious damage from FICA," explains Ritacco, who argues that the 1987 FICA law has caused a *tripling* of his federal taxes.

"Restaurateurs need to understand that this is not just another tax increase; this is a backbreaker," he says. "If all restaurateurs knew what FICA was taking from them, they'd have a heart attack."

Angry restaurateurs resent having to pay payroll taxes on money that never touches their hands. And they do not plan on simply sitting back and watching FICA taxes eat up the restaurant's bottom line.

Ritacco and other operators are currently involved in an all-out effort, led by the National Restaurant Association, to repeal the FICA tax-on-tips law. Letters and phone calls to Congress are the battering rams being used to knock down the unfair tax law. Proposed legislation would restore pre-1988 requirements for payment of Social Security taxes. That is, FICA taxes would be paid only on tips that are used to satisfy minimum-wage requirements.

Inequities of the FICA tax

"The logic of our paying taxes on income our employees receive directly from our customers escapes me," explains Robert C. Trotter, owner of Charlie Trotter's restaurant in Chicago, who did not escape paying an extra $28,000 in FICA taxes last year.

The lack of employer control over tips, Trotter notes, is one of the most compelling arguments in favor of repeal. Restaurateurs agree that they are responsible for paying FICA taxes on wages that they can control. But because tipping is a transaction between server and customer, restaurateurs say it is unfair to categorize tips as taxable payroll wages.

During hearings on the FICA proposal in 1987, the late Sen. John Heinz (R-PA) touched on this argument, saying, "There appears to be no rational reason to justify the proposed change. Management has no control over whether a customer will tip or how much he or she will tip." Another senator, John Chafee (R-RI), referred that year to the FICA plan as "nonsense."

Richard R. Frank, vice president of Lawry's Restaurants, Inc., in Los Angeles, points to another inequity: While tips are not allowed to be fully credited against an employer's federal minimum-wage obligations, tax law requires employers to pay FICA taxes on all tips.

"Either allow 100 percent of reported tips to go against the minimum wage, or eliminate the FICA tax on the portion of reported tips in excess of the minimum-wage credit," argued Frank in a letter to Sen. Alan Cranston (D-CA).

Frank says his company has paid nearly $500,000 in added FICA taxes over the past three years. Frank contends that the added taxes, which account for 43 percent of Lawry's after-tax profits, "could have otherwise gone into building our business and creating jobs."

The FICA law has put restaurateurs in an unenviable position. Employers are now put at the mercy of their employees. A boss cannot control the amount of tip income an employee receives or reports, yet underreporting by employees can lead to the IRS demanding thousands of dollars in back FICA taxes from restaurateurs. (See "IRS Tip Audits Spark FICA Friction" in September 1991 ***Restaurants USA.***)

Restaurateurs also strongly object to the reason the increased tax was added in 1988. They say that foodservice was unfairly singled out

as a taxing "victim" in order to raise federal revenues to meet the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction targets. The additional revenue was not needed to boost the Social Security trust fund, which is what FICA taxes are ostensibly for, nor will it increase retirement benefits for tipped workers. Restaurateurs resent the use of this unfair tax money to make the federal budget deficit appear smaller.

The impact

The financial burden brought on by this unexpected tax has forced many restaurants to teeter on the brink of shutting down.

Take the example of a restaurant with annual sales of $750,000 and 15 tipped employees who report an average of $7.50 in tips per hour. Each of the three years since the law took effect, this restaurant would have been forced to pay approximately $8,300 in additional FICA taxes. FICA contributions for such a restaurant would almost triple.

So far, the additional FICA taxes have not caused a massive closing of eateries around the country. But many are being forced to compromise quality in their restaurants by cutting staff, benefits and even working hours.

At Salty's Harborside Restaurant in Punta Gorda, Florida, higher taxes have caused a reduction in working hours for the 48-worker staff as owners try to avoid higher menu prices. Food and beverage director Jay Fields says the fallout from the added FICA tax will ultimately hurt the customer.

"The bottom line is that the public will be the one to suffer. They will be the true losers. They will get hit with higher prices," says Fields. "How are we going to pull out of this economic crunch if we are confronted with more regulation and taxes?"

Tom Margittai, owner/partner at The Four Seasons in New York City, says the FICA taxes amount to a "devastating blow to our operation's bottom line." Margittai says the restaurant has been forced to lay off many employees, institute a hiring and salary freeze, and put on hold many routine maintenance projects and equipment purchases.

At Matty's Wayside Inn in Glenview, Illinois, more cuts in employee benefits are being considered. Explains owner Matty Fegers, "This legislation has forced me to increase menu prices, lay off personnel, and decrease the hours of waitstaff whenever possible, as I can no longer run a profitable business." Fegers says his restaurant's next cutback will most likely come in the area of health and accident insurance offered to employees.

How the FICA tax happened

Congress first addressed the issue of taxation on tip income during debate over the Social Security Amendments of 1965. At that time, Congress agreed that tip income was a different kind of income and could not be treated the same as regular wages. Therefore, Congress decided that employers must pay FICA taxes on all wages plus on any tip income used as a "tip credit" to satisfy an employer's minimum-wage obligations.

But on January 1, 1988, a new law took effect that required employers to pay Social Security payroll taxes on all tip income. The measure had been passed hastily as part of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987, a tax package aimed at finding revenue to reduce the federal deficit.

The National Restaurant Association fought hard to eliminate the last-minute addition of the FICA tax-on-tips provision from the $9 billion tax package. But intense pressure to reduce the deficit sealed final approval for the FICA provision. So far, the 1987 law has cost employers more than $800 million in added FICA taxes over the past three years.

An effort to repeal the FICA law began almost immediately after its approval. During the 101st Congress (1989–90), repeal legislation garnered 175 sponsors in the House and 23 sponsors in the Senate. That bill failed to make it to a floor vote.

Again in March 1991, legislation to repeal the FICA tax-on-tips law was introduced in the 102nd Congress. Sen. John Breaux (D–LA) and Rep. Byron Dorgan (D–ND) initiated repeal bills in each house of Congress.

"I do not believe that Congress fully understood the adverse conse-

What restaurateurs are saying about the FICA tax

"I have been in business for over 15 years, but my business has never been more negatively impacted than when Congress passed the law making tips fully taxable for FICA purposes."

—Frank B. Hanna Sr.
Royal Exchange Pub
Salisbury, Maryland

"Our industry is being taxed to death. . . . In the 25 years I have worked in the industry, I've never been so scared about my future. It is sad to think of all the work, sweat and pride that has gone into my business, and yet not to know for sure if I'll be around next spring."

—Michael F. Greenfield
Michael's Seafood & Steak Tavern
Ludlow, Vermont

"Congress has, perhaps unwittingly, helped kill the entrepreneurial spirit in this country at a time when foreign competition is already doing its share. Surely no American wants to see companies fall by the wayside because of our own laws, which cause such hardship on the business owner."

—Carole Jean Rogers
The Rib Tavern, Inc.
Louisville, Kentucky

"We operate on an extremely thin profit margin. If our lawmakers are truly concerned about jobs, they should do all they can to keep our businesses healthy—not make it more expensive to operate."

—Paul Kreins
Bowl-ero
Idaho Falls, Idaho

"The employer-paid FICA tax on tips is not only unjust, but it's another way of ducking true fiscal responsibility by finding a gray area to tax."

—Walter Kane
Domino's Pizza
Tucson, Arizona

quences of that 1987 decision," Dorgan told his colleagues this year while introducing the repeal bill known as H.R. 1472. "This change in the FICA tax treatment of tips has had a significant impact on a lot of small restaurants in North Dakota and around the country. I think we ought to change this unfair law."

In only six months, this repeal legislation has already attracted more cosponsors than the entire previous effort. As of September 25, FICA repeal legislation had garnered 198 House sponsors and 33 sponsors in the Senate.

With constant pressure from America's restaurateurs, the association hopes to gather at least a majority of the Congress (218 House members and 51 senators) as sponsors of the legislation. Collecting additional sponsors would further increase pressure on committee leaders to bring the legislation to a vote before the full Congress.

The opposition

When Congress gets hold of a tax-revenue source, however, undoing such a tax can be as difficult as trying to unbake an overcooked muffin.

In a May 1991 luncheon, members of the New Jersey Restaurant Association engaged Sen. Bill Bradley (D-NJ) in a spirited discussion about repealing the 3-year-old FICA law. Bradley's defiance against repealing the tax on tips is symbolic of the uphill road that the repeal legislation must travel.

"At this point, I don't support any change in the law," said Bradley. "Not unless you come up with some other way to offset that money. Every group wants less taxes—less taxes for me and more spending for me." Making prudent fiscal policy, Bradley said, "means saying no."

Proposals that lead to less revenue for the government are often difficult to push through Congress. The fight for FICA repeal may also be complicated by a new "pay-as-you-go" agreement that was part of Congress's 1990 budget agreement. That provision requires any reduction in Social Security revenues to be offset either by Social Security tax increases or by cuts in Social Security programs.

Like many other legislators, Idaho senator Steve Symms (R) is aware of the "pay-as-you-go" complication, but has signed on to cosponsor the FICA repeal legislation. As Symms wrote in a letter to a Boise restaurateur, "While I am concerned about where these offsetting tax increases will fall, I have decided to cosponsor this legislation because I believe in its intent."

Before the full Congress can cast its votes on this issue, FICA repeal legislation must pass through powerful tax-writing committees: the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee. The association is leading a focused effort to convince committee members—and especially the chairmen of those committees, Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-TX) and Rep. Dan Rostenkowski (D-IL)—to allow a floor vote on the issue.

Because of the pay-as-you-go law and the large federal deficit, revenue-losing legislation faces an especially difficult battle this year. As Sen. Dale Bumpers (D-AR), chairman of the Senate Small Business Committee, told a constituent, the tax-writing committees "have not been receptive to legislative proposals eliminating current taxes or creating tax deductions."

Association efforts

The National Restaurant Association's lobbying staff, while providing steering and direction, continues to rely on association members to supply the real power behind the FICA repeal movement. Since H.R. 1472 and S. 765 were introduced in March, restaurateurs have mailed and faxed thousands of letters to their representatives in Congress.

"Restaurateurs are sometimes divided on an issue, but on the FICA tax, they are unanimous," says William P. Fisher, the association's executive vice president. "Restaurateurs are absolutely passionate about FICA repeal. You can see it in their letters."

In mid-August, the association began a letter-writing campaign by restaurateurs who live in congressional districts of the 24 legislators who cosponsored FICA repeal in the last Congress yet have failed to sign on again this year. Restaurateurs in these districts have already begun prompting these lawmakers to again join the FICA repeal fight. In fact, four of these legislators recently jumped aboard the FICA-repeal bandwagon.

Also during the August recess, restaurateurs in more than 20 states hosted congressional district meetings in their establishments. The meetings brought lawmakers face to face with restaurant issues—especially FICA repeal. Many of these meetings involved members of the influential tax committees.

The association's goal is to collect as many cosponsors as possible in order to demonstrate the significance of this legislation and bring quicker action by the chairmen of the tax-writing committees.

The National Restaurant Association continues to urge restaurateurs to meet with their lawmakers personally and to write, call or fax their FICA arguments to their representatives and senators. Although association lobbyists are working for FICA repeal and other issues, personal meetings and letters from hometown taxpayers are the most effective way to influence a member of Congress. ❑

Pat DiDomenico is a communications specialist at the National Restaurant Association.

How to fight FICA

When you write to your member of Congress to urge the repeal of the FICA tax on tips, be sure to explain:

- ☐ specific ways in which the FICA law has damaged your business or eliminated jobs
- ☐ that charging payroll taxes on non-payroll income is unjust because employers don't control tip income
- ☐ that federal tip laws concerning FICA and minimum wage are inconsistent
- ☐ that increasing Social Security (FICA) taxes is an artificial way of balancing the budget.

Address letters to your member of Congress at U.S. House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515, and to your senators at U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510.

For more information on how individual restaurateurs can help repeal the law, contact Patti Stinger at (800) 424-5156 or (202) 331-5953.

TURNING TABLES

WHEN THE RUSH IS ON

It goes without saying that if you can turn more tables during peak periods and cut down on waiting time, your restaurant will be more profitable. Servers who pick up the pace earn more money, too. Here's how one Manhattan restaurant turns controlled haste into profit.

Photos by Charlie Samuels

by Toni Lydecker

Union Square Cafe's front door opens constantly as customers flow in and out. At lunchtime, publishers and advertising executives talk shop leisurely, but glance at their watches all the while. In the evening, stylish locals and tourists stop in for dinner, but some ask nervously how long the cab ride uptown to the theater will take.

Servers glide swiftly from dining room to kitchen and back. Diners hoist tuna club sandwiches and forksful of vegetable risotto. Managers hustle to answer the phone or set a table for the next party. A bartender

glances at the computer screen to see how many drinks need ice, then deftly throws a scoop over the four glasses in her hand. Loud as it is, the music is almost drowned out by the din of conversation and order-taking.

The rush is on, but not to worry. At this New York City restaurant, frenzied activity is the norm. Service manager Patrick Norton explains, "This restaurant is like a Porsche, built to run most efficiently at 80 miles per hour. When it's not busy, we're waiting for it to be busy. When it hits, everyone goes."

Busy means profitable

Tending bar at Union Square Cafe last New Year's Eve, Agnes Devereux worked from 6 p.m. to 3 a.m. without stopping—and loved every minute. Partly, it was the satisfaction of doing a hard job well. But she adds, "That night, I made the most money I ever have."

For everyone from Devereux to owner Danny Meyer, the profit motive adds to the thrill of coping with a crowd. Handled expertly, a peak period sends up a geyser of profit to sustain the whole operation.

"The pace is everything," says Meyer. When the timing is right, the restaurant can serve 300 people with ease. When it's off, 220 can seem overwhelming.

Over seven successful years, Union Square Cafe has developed soup-to-nuts systems that help the staff cope with the rush—most of the time—without cutting corners on food or service.

Booking tables

A successful day depends so much on how reservations are handled that Meyer employs a full-time manager, Ellie Campbell, for that purpose alone. "She is highly qualified, highly paid and worth every penny," he says.

Spacing out reservations at 15-minute intervals not only helps floor managers greet and seat customers gracefully, but heads off the danger of slamming the kitchen. For the same reason, Campbell books fewer tables than are available in the critical 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. time slots. The larger the party, the longer they take to order and eat, making it a gamble to book a table for eight twice in an evening.

Campbell recognizes most of the restaurant's regulars by voice on the telephone and, according to Meyer, "makes everyone feel great, whether they've been here before or not." Campbell says honesty is important, too. "If we're over our limit for pre-theater, I tell them we can't promise to have them out by show time," she says.

Even so, frustrated callers sometimes accuse her of holding tables aside or assume that business is slow when it isn't. "It's summer; you must have a table" is a line Campbell has heard more than once.

Because an empty table means lost money, the restaurant tries to minimize no-shows. Patrons are asked to reconfirm their reservations; Campbell calls those who fail to do so several hours before the arrival time. A mark indicating reservations made that day tells her whom to skip.

Greeting and seating

Unfortunately, customers don't always behave according to the reservations book. Some parties might arrive a little early, others a little late. Or maybe only part of the party arrives on time, leading to delays in ordering. "You're working on averages," says Meyer. "Most of the time, luck is in our favor. But you can have a situation where the 12:15s are all late, the 12:30s are on time and the 12:45s are early. When that happens, the kitchen gets slammed."

A few minutes before the first arrivals, Meyer and the floor manager "plot" the tables, trying to foresee and avoid foul-ups. If the entire 1:30 slot is booked, they know they'll need to get three out of four of the 12:00 tables back by then and will ask the servers to work toward that goal.

Reading through the reservations list several times helps managers and servers instantly recognize the names of arriving customers, even those who have never been in the restaurant before. This technique contributes to the warm service reviewers often mention in writing about Union Square Cafe.

As the meal progresses, Meyer and his staff circulate through the dining rooms, trying to gauge how many walk-ins they can take. If some tables are eating ahead of schedule, Meyer thinks about squeezing in an extra table or two. Meyer likes to "push it to the edge," but adds, "You can't be a pig about it just to maximize revenues, or you'll end up with angry customers."

Moving the meal along

Brisk, attentive service pleases customers and turns tables faster. Servers are encouraged to present the menu immediately and return a few minutes later to explain the specials and answer questions.

Though strong-arm tactics are taboo, servers might nudge procrastinators, saying, "The softshell crabs are excellent tonight, but they're selling

Lunchtime in the Union Square Cafe kitchen. "Sometimes I actually slow the tempo down when we get busy," says sous chef and expediter Mark Dorian. "There's only so much the cooks can do, and if I threw all the tickets at them, they'd be crippled."

fast. If you'd like, I'll see if the kitchen has any left."

Some servers don't write down orders before punching them into the terminal. Devereux, who is one such server, thinks that having to concentrate improves her accuracy. It's too easy to mentally disengage while scribbling down an order for steak with a side of spinach. Listening, she remembers to say the steak already comes with spinach.

Appetizers are normally fired six to nine minutes after the order hits the kitchen, with a goal of 10 minutes for entrees. Those times can be trimmed a little for lunch and for the dozen pre-theater tables the restaurant books. The speed is appreciated by customers who have places to go and people to see. "People are often nervous, especially if they're going uptown," says Norton. "We let them know we can get them out on time if they work with us." In other words, patrons can't linger over a second cocktail and expect the kitchen to shoot out the main course on demand.

Servers find that clearing utensils and dishes off the table as soon as customers have finished helps move the meal along. "When people have nothing to toy with, they get restless. Usually, if the coffee cups are gone, they'll go ahead and ask for the check," says Devereux.

Smooth service

New hires must survive five shifts, an exam and an interview with Meyer before joining the permanent staff. Staff members who make it have strong technical skills and thrive on pressure.

But Meyer wants something beyond efficiency. "I want customers to perceive our service as intelligent," he says. "I think people like the fact that everyone from me on down is taking care of them." Because Meyer worries that bussers, no matter how competent, might not give well-informed answers to inquiries about food and wine, servers at Union Square Cafe bus their own tables. When servers get behind, managers pitch in.

To ensure smooth service, every server has an official partner, and unofficially, they watch out for one another. Everyone especially keeps an eye on station 2, where the server must handle three tables in the bar

During each shift, two servers support the others as food and beverage deliverers. One transports food from the kitchen; the other shuttles drinks from the bar and opens wine.

area, then sprint up several steps to reach the others. In each dining area, a point-of-sale terminal is within easy reach. And there is a special "Help!" code that the server on solo duty in the mezzanine dining room (up a steep flight of stairs) can use to call for a backup.

Every meal period, two servers are assigned in rotation to support the other servers as beverage and food deliverers. The first does nothing but deliver food, while the second shuttles drinks from the bar and opens wine.

Managers are on hand to fill in around the edges or smooth out problems. On a given day, the service manager might help a harried server by resetting tables, act as a go-between with the kitchen to expedite an order and solve a missing glassware mystery. (Maybe someone dropped a rack the night before.)

Kitchen business

That emotions rarely boil over in the kitchen is due largely to executive chef Michael Romano's calm temperament. "I've never heard him raise his voice," says Devereux. "He won't let waiters blow off steam in the kitchen, complaining about customers. It can upset people on the line, and they need to concentrate on their own work."

If front-of-the-house staff fail in their efforts to stagger orders, the kitchen computer keeps spewing out orders. Occasionally, several orders go into computer limbo, to stay until someone suddenly notices they have not come out. It is sous chef Mark Dorian's job, as expediter, to make sense of this chaos for the cooks.

"Sometimes, I actually slow the tempo down when we get busy. There's only so much the cooks can

Lunchtime at Union Square Cafe

10:40 One bartender stockpiles glasses and counts money, while another cuts lemons and limes. The owner is on the phone, trying to straighten out "an equipment problem" with a new credit-card system. In the kitchen, soups are finished, garnishes and sauces readied.

11:00 The staff eats the "family meal" together, clears the dishes, resets the tables.

11:30 At a five-minute meeting, the owner urges servers to get the menus out fast to help the pacing along. The sous chef explains the day's specials and passes them around to servers for tasting.

11:40 Plotting their lunchtime strategy, the owner and floor manager worry about a large party coming at 1:30. They decide to seat the first arrivals of the day at tables 34 and 36, in the hope of getting those tables back in time for the large party. The server is alerted to this plan.

12:00 Customers begin to arrive. Two women and a man are seated at table 13, near the door. "Mr. Punctual, aren't you?" the owner says jokingly to one regular, while another is complimented on his tie. First-timers get a breezy, efficient reception, too: "Come with me; we're all set for you."

12:35 The board in the kitchen is completely filled, which means appetizer orders are coming in on schedule. Table 13 is eating oysters with champagne.

12:45 The seating chart fills up with Xs (or, in the case of an uncompleted party, half an X). Table 13's burgers arrive. The kitchen is humming.

1:05 Table 13 is cleared, and the customers ask for dessert menus. No dessert after all. They order coffee.

1:30 The lunchtime rush peaks, as the second big seating begins. Three parties line the wall beside the bar, having been told, "We'll have your table ready any minute." Tables 34 and 36 are vacated and set up for the large group.

1:35 The three waiting parties are seated.

2:00 The big party (with the 1:30 reservation) finally arrives, to the owner's relief. The restaurant is still filled, but the pace begins to ease.

2:30 Most tables are eating dessert, leaving servers free to reset tables, ready condiments for dinner, fold napkins. The kitchen is still buzzing, as some staff finish lunch orders, while the newly arrived evening crew begins dinner prep. The bar is down to one bartender, who counts money and begins to stockpile glasses for dinner.

do, and if I threw all the tickets at them, they'd be crippled," he says.

The kitchen is challenged by an ambitious menu with virtually no crossover; each dish has its own sauce, its own garnish. In part because of the menu's complexity, the restaurant cannot accept all the pretheater requests it gets. "There is a constant battle between having a forward-thinking, imaginative menu and a streamlined one that will allow us to handle a little more business," says Meyer.

Meyer is not afraid to consider new methods of expediting service. Eating in another restaurant, Meyer noted that seven of eight appetizers were from the cold station, a menu decision that translated directly into faster table turns than at Union Square Cafe, where 9 of 15 appetizers were hot. Meyer and Romano decided to drop one hot appetizer that was slowing down the kitchen and to replace another hot appetizer with a cold appetizer.

Meyer and Romano also avoid planning nightly specials that rely on the same person who is responsible for the restaurant's traditional weekly special. Tuesday is the night for grilled rib steak, for example, so the other special is never from the grill. Whatever the special is for Monday, it won't be from the saute station, because that cook is already preparing the tarragon chicken.

Part of the allure

There are as many tricks for handling a crowd as there are restaurateurs facing this enviable problem. Those that *stay* busy understand one thing: Letting food and service standards slide during the rush can be fatal. Unless they feel well-treated, customers will go elsewhere.

For the luckiest ones, like Union Square Cafe, the filled tables and bustling staff become part of the allure. "People don't always realize it, but one of the things customers like about this restaurant is the energy level," says Meyer. "Usually, excellence comes with a more subdued atmosphere. We offer the same quality in an exciting atmosphere." ❑

Toni Lydecker is a writer in Irvington, New York.

DO YOU HAVE A COST OF SALES PROBLEM?

by John R. Rousselle

The first step in controlling food and beverage cost is to find out whether you have a problem that needs controlling. This industry expert says that some restaurateurs are doing better than they think at controlling food cost—and some are doing much worse.

The successful restaurant manager must be able to evaluate cost of sales with precision. All too often, management isn't fully aware of the success of its cost-of-sales control system.

What does cost of sales mean? It's how much you spend on the food and beverages that you serve. For the purposes of this article, "food and beverage cost," "cost of sales" and "COS" will be used interchangeably.

Historically, cost of sales and labor cost have been the two highest costs of restaurant operations. The National Restaurant Association's *Restaurant Industry Operations Report—1991* indicates that combined food and beverage cost was the highest cost on a weighted-average basis at both limited-menu tableservice restaurants and fast food restaurants. At cafeterias and full-menu tableservice (fine-dining) restaurants, combined food and beverage cost was just slightly less than labor cost. See figure 1.

Control of food and beverage cost is so important that it requires constant attention. However, attention to cost of sales usually intensifies only when there is a problem with it. During these periods, management reviews the various control systems in place and initiates other procedures to correct the problem. It is common for these extraordinary measures to have the result of reducing efforts in other important areas of the operation.

It is also true that when management perceives that food and beverage cost is OK, then the systems that control these costs are somewhat overlooked and effort is devoted to weaker areas.

The key is to know when cost of sales really needs special attention and when it is satisfactory. What we really want to know is how well the cost-of-sales control system is functioning. Determining this will be possible only with an accurate evaluation of cost of sales. To do so requires (1) having an acceptable standard for comparison and (2) knowing the actual cost of sales for the period.

The sources of standards

There are four possible sources of standards against which an operator

FIGURE 1

Cost of sales and labor cost in restaurants

Cost of sales (or combined food and beverage cost) is the highest cost in two out of the four restaurant categories

	Full-menu tableservice	Limited-menu tableservice	Limited-menu no tableservice	Cafeterias
Cost of food	27.3%	27.6%	33.1%	31.1%
Cost of beverages	5.4	3.9	0.5	0.9
Cost of sales	**32.7**	**31.5**	**33.6**	**32.0**
Payroll	28.8	26.6	23.9	29.7
Employee benefits	4.3	3.6	2.5	2.6
Total labor	33.1	30.2	26.4	32.3

Note: *All figures are weighted averages.*
Source: National Restaurant Association, *Restaurant Industry Operations Report—1991*

can compare cost of sales. An operator may use industry results, sister-unit results, historical results or a self-generated standard. Each source has advantages and disadvantages.

Industry results, both national and local, are published periodically by various agencies. Although published results are interesting and offer some broad guidelines, an individual operator should probably not rely on this data for strict comparisons. Published figures are averages for operations that participate in a survey. Unless an operator knows that operations in a survey correspond exactly to his or her restaurant, the standard won't be appropriate for that particular operation. In addition, published data reflect past information. Given the dynamic nature of our industry, standards should be based on current information.

Even more important is the fact that published studies show only what has happened—not what should have happened. Knowing that the average full-menu restaurant had a cost of sales of 32.7 percent does not mean that it *should* be at that level. Possibly it should have been lower—maybe much lower.

Using standards produced from sister units is not much better. Even units of a chain are different. They may have identical layouts, items, prices, vendors and operating systems, but they are still different. Three of the most significant differences are revenues, sales mix and employees. Any of these can alter the cost of sales so much as to make results and standards from other units irrelevant.

Historical results are probably the most common standards because they are usually readily available. The thought is that as long as the operation matches or exceeds the previous results, everything is satisfactory.

The first weakness of the historical approach is that it ignores the dynamic nature of the restaurant business. Employees come and go, vendor prices change, menus and recipes change, and customer preferences change. These changes may make one period's cost of sales very different from that of a previous period.

The other weakness of using historical results is that the previous period's results may have been disastrous. A slight improvement on a terrible outcome is usually not a reason for joy. It is a little like a football team that was beaten by 50 points last week rejoicing over a 30-point loss this week. It may be an improvement, but it is still a terrible beating and the team needs work. Unfortunately, some managers view any improvement in cost of sales as an indication that it is satisfactory.

What is needed is a standard that applies to the specific restaurant in the current period. Forget the past and ignore other operations. This standard requires an ongoing examination of the restaurant. The basic data needed is available in many operations now or can be generated without an unreasonable amount of effort.

Generating your own standard

The following are the steps in developing such a standard.

1. Develop and use standard recipes.
2. Calculate the standard cost of menu items.
3. Select proper prices for menu items.
4. Track the sales mix.

Use standard recipes. One of the most important control steps of management is to develop and require employees to use standard recipes. Management cannot know the cost of an item unless the contents are known. Whenever a company directs employees to prepare an item, management must know its ingredients, quantity and yield. Without this information, management can only guess at the cost of the item. If management doesn't know the cost of one unit of an item, how can it know the cost of a day's or week's worth of the item?

An additional reason for standard

Determining a standard for cost of sales

Figure 2a yields a false standard for cost of sales because it does not take into account the restaurant's sales mix

Item	Price	Cost	Cost%
A	$5.00	$1.75	35.0%
B	7.00	3.30	47.1%
		Mean =	41.1%

Figure 2b reflects the restaurant's sales mix to arrive at a true standard

Item	Price	Cost	Cost%	Sold	Total cost	Total sales
A	$5.00	$1.75	35.0%	50	$ 87.50	$ 250.00
B	7.00	3.30	47.1%	150	495.00	1,050.00
				Totals	$582.50	$1,300.00
		$583			Gross	
		$1,300 =	44.8%		profit =	$ 717.50

In figure 2c, a change in the sales mix makes for a lower cost of sales than in figure 2b. Note, however, that gross profit is lower

Item	Price	Cost	Cost%	Sold	Total cost	Total sales
A	$5.00	$1.75	35.0%	150	262.50	$ 750.00
B	7.00	3.30	47.1%	50	165.00	350.00
				Totals	$427.50	$1,100.00
		$428			Gross	
		$1,100 =	38.9%		profit =	$ 672.50

recipes is the importance of consistency to the success of a hospitality operation. Customers may contend that they like to try new things, but the truth is that the typical American consumer doesn't really like surprises. In particular, customers don't like to take chances with their stomachs. Normally, they will choose an item they know over one they are unfamiliar with. We see this daily in customers who select the same items each time they enter a restaurant. The only way to ensure that guests receive consistent products is the adoption and use of standard recipes.

Calculate the standard cost of menu items. Calculating the cost of the standard recipe from the prices paid for the ingredients is a necessary and potentially time-consuming next step.

To maintain an up-to-date list of each item's cost (the COS standard), these calculations should be done frequently. Ideally, the cost of each item is recalculated each time the cost of an ingredient changes. In times of frequent vendor price changes, most items should be re-costed weekly or several times a week. Even in times of relative price stability, ingredient cost changes are frequent enough to call for recalculating the standard costs monthly.

Computerized restaurant management systems have significantly eased this burden by making these calculations for management. These systems combine stored standard recipes with current vendor prices (input by the operator) to produce accurate and current item cost whenever requested.

Without a computer system, management must do this work manually. The time required to re-cost an entire menu discourages most from the task. At a minimum, all items should be re-costed twice a year. Popular items, particularly entrees and other high-cost items, should be done at least monthly.

Select proper prices for menu items. Selecting prices for products and services is one of management's most important tasks. Managers should keep in mind that it requires attention to a number of factors other than the cost of items. The other factors that are particularly important are market demand, availability from competitors, and the ambience and service style of the operation. The price should be selected, not merely calculated from the item's cost plus some desired markup.

Track the sales mix. The final step in determining an operation's individual cost-of-sales standard is to track the sales mix. That is, the manager must determine the number of items sold as compared with other items. Figure 2 illustrates the importance of this step with a simple example. It presents the results of a two-product operation.

Figure 2a shows the price, cost and resultant cost percentage for the two items. Some managers might accept the 41.1 percent figure as a standard for cost of sales because it is an "average" of the items' cost percentages. However, as we will see, this acceptance could cause some serious management errors. To find a true standard cost, a manager must consider the level of sales of the items.

In figure 2b, the operation sold 50 of item A and 150 of item B. The figure shows the resulting cost and sales for each item and the total. This result yields a weighted average of 44.8 percent.

In figure 2c, the sales of items A and B have been switched. This combination of sales generates a completely different average of 38.9 percent—a 6 percent difference. This change is due only to a different sales mix. The items, their prices and their cost were unchanged.

Ignoring these results can lead to serious management mistakes. For example, if a manager accepted the mean from figure 2a as the standard, but the sales mix is as in 2b, management would probably waste time solving a problem that doesn't exist. Fig-

ure 2b shows that the standard should be 44.8 percent. If actual cost of sales is 44.9 percent, it would be a sign of very effective cost control when compared with the appropriate standard of 44.8 percent. However, if management is expecting cost of sales to be closer to the mean figure of 41.1 percent, it may view the results as a disaster. One can imagine the time and effort that would be spent looking for the "missing" 4 percent.

On the other hand, if actual results are as in Figure 2c, a different scenario would follow. Suppose the actual cost of sales is 41 percent. If the mean of 41.1 percent is accepted as the standard, management would be satisfied with the cost-control system. However, figure 2c indicates that the cost of sales should be 38.9 percent. This is more than 2 percent lower than the actual results. Most operators would consider a 2 percent variance from the standard to be unacceptable and a sign of a control problem. So a problem might be ignored if the wrong standard is used.

The implications for profits

Figure 2 also illustrates another important point. Notice that the gross profit is higher with the sales mix that has a higher cost of sales, $717.50 versus $672.50. This example defies the frequently held notion that the key to increased profits is to reduce cost of sales. It's not true. Lower cost of sales does not guarantee higher profits. Therefore, operators who seek to increase profits by reducing cost of sales are on a false quest. In fact, their efforts may lead to lower profits.

Tracking the sales mix is relatively easy with current point-of-sale devices. If a restaurant doesn't have a point-of-sale system with this capability, managers must use another method. Low-volume operations can record item sales by reviewing all guest checks daily—a practice that can be too time-consuming for high-volume operations. A random sample of checks may be used at high-volume operations. For example, if managers want to sample 10 percent of checks, all checks with the ending check number "1" can be pulled and their items recorded. Reviewing checks with ending numbers of "1" and "2" would generate a 20 percent sample size.

Any of these methods will work satisfactorily if properly done. The important thing to remember is that the sales mix must be determined for each period for which a cost-of-sales standard is desired. Each day's, week's and month's sales mix will be different. Thus, even if the standard costs of individual items are unchanged, the standard for total cost of sales will vary from period to period because the sales mix will be different. To assume that it will be the same (that is, that tracking the sales mix is unnecessary) is dangerous. It denies the dynamic nature of the industry and will ultimately create management error by relying on inaccurate information.

Calculating actual cost of sales

The formulas for the calculation of food cost and beverage cost are almost identical. See figure 3. The only difference is the adjustment made to food cost for the cost of free meals given to employees.

FIGURE 3

Calculation of food and beverage cost

Food cost		Beverage cost	
Beginning inventory	$ 4,000	Beginning inventory	$ 3,500
+ Purchases	45,000	+ Purchases	15,000
+ Delivery charges	100	+ Delivery charges	100
− Ending inventory	4,500	− Ending inventory	3,000
Cost of food consumed	$44,600	Cost of beverages	$15,600
− Employee meals	3,000		
Cost of food sold	$41,600	Cost of beverages	$15,600
Sales	$84,000	Sales	$50,000

Food cost % = Cost of food sold/food sales
= $41,600/$84,000
= 49.5%

Beverage cost % = Cost of beverages/beverage sales
= $15,600/$50,000
= 31.2%

Total cost of sales

Sales		Cost	
Food	$84,000	Food	$41,600
Beverage	$50,000	Beverage	$15,600
Total	$134,000	Total	$57,200

$$\frac{\$57,200}{\$134,000} = 42.7\%$$

These simple formulas are management's most powerful control tool. Without calculating these costs on a regular basis, management has no way to evaluate the success of its cost-of-sales control system. At a minimum, these costs should be determined monthly. If the operation's cost of sales deviates too far from the standard, management should make these calculations more frequently.

Don't chase phantoms or ignore weaknesses

Controlling cost of sales is a difficult task. However, it is more difficult if management cannot clearly identify when a problem exists. Accurate generation of both a cost-of-sales standard and the actual cost of sales is extremely important. Restaurant managers have too much to do to be chasing phantom problems or ignoring true weakness in the operation. ❑

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SAVOR THE SQUASH

by Jay Solomon

Martha Vaughan

Until recently, squash had an image problem. The family of oddly shaped vegetables wasn't hip enough to swing to the tunes of nouvelle cuisine. Baby squash and squash flowers were cute, but larger squash were told, in effect, to get a name change and lose some weight. Squash were big, lumpy vegetables with no place to go.

Then came the 1990s, and the advent of wholesome, unpretentious cuisine. The humble and underrated squash have been enthusiastically welcomed into the kitchen. With a little ingenuity, the motley crew of squash adds flair, texture and substance to soups, salads, sauces, breads and desserts. In addition, squash are high in vitamins and fiber, and low in sodium and calories. Squash are also inexpensive and easy to prepare.

There are two groups of squash—summer and winter—although many squash are now available year-round. The two families share similar physical characteristics. Summer squash have tender skin, few seeds, moist flesh and rapid cooking times. Winter squash have hard-shelled skins, low moisture content and long shelf lives.

Summer squash

Summer squash include dark green zucchini, pale green patty pans, yellow sunburst patty pans, yellow crooknecks and straightnecks, and the gnarled, pear-shaped chayotes (or christophenes). All of the summer squash are interchangeable within recipes. Squash can be prepared without peeling or blanching, although larger squash have more seeds and a tougher skin.

Zucchini is the best known summer squash and is available year-round. Patty pans are gaining in popularity. Shaped like flying saucers, patty pans can be stuffed, shredded, or julienned and sauteed. Sunburst patty pans are hybrids of zucchini and patty pan, and exhibit a golden yellow color with a splash of green.

Chayote is a relative newcomer on the American cooking scene, but has a wide international resume. Chayotes are prevalent in Latin America, the Caribbean and Indonesia—as well as in Louisiana, where they are known as mirliton. Chayotes are mildly flavored, crisp and firm—ideal for stir-frying and sauteing. The larger vegetables must be peeled and require a longer cooking time. Like patty pans, chayotes can be baked and stuffed for an elegant side dish.

Fresh herbs such as oregano, basil, tarragon, thyme and dill enhance the mild, cucumber-like flavor of summer squash. For a simple side dish, saute an assortment of julienned summer squash with cherry tomatoes, red onion, asparagus and fresh herbs. Summer squash make a light filling for omelets, a topping for pizza and a skewer companion for sizzling kabobs. Dark-skinned squash can be added to pancakes and crepes for added color, texture and flavor. Squash can be shredded for a salad garnish; chopped for soups and stews; or combined with carrots for light breads, muffins and cakes.

Choose summer squash with a taut and glossy skin, firm flesh and no blemishes. Loosely wrapped squash can be stored in the refrigerator for about a week.

Winter squash

Winter squash include dark green acorn squash; tan, cello-shaped butternut squash; yellow spaghetti squash (or vegetable squash); elephantine, greenish-blue hubbard squash; turban-shaped gold or green buttercup squash; a variety of Japanese kabochas; golden nuggets; and large tan or green-striped calabazas. Also in the winter squash family are a variety of pumpkins, including jack-o-lanterns, sugar pie and miniature jack-be-littles (or munchkins).

Pumpkin is one of the most underrated and misunderstood squash. Although canned pumpkin is widely available, fresh pumpkin is rarely contemplated for culinary purposes. True, some fresh pumpkins are destined for the Thanksgiving pumpkin pie, but most are carved into Halloween ornaments with ghoulish faces.

Yet pumpkins radiate a mild, sweet potato-like flavor and texture, and meld well into sauces and soups. Pumpkins are loaded with vitamins (especially beta carotene) and minerals, yet are low in calories and sodium. Pasta primavera with pumpkin sauce, chicken with pumpkin coconut sauce, and pumpkin-apple soup have been popular autumn specials at my restaurant. Perhaps what pumpkins need is a good public relations firm.

Calabaza (or West Indian pumpkin) adds exotic allure to the menu. Similar to the jack-o-lantern, calabazas are extremely large with a bright orange, sweet flesh. Calabaza is often sold in wedges in Latin American and Caribbean markets. Island seasonings such as allspice, nutmeg, thyme, ginger and chili peppers enhance the flavor of calabaza.

In the asylum of squash, spaghetti squash is one of the more eccentric members. When cooked, the flesh separates into pasta-like strands. This phenomenon has inspired an array of spin-offs from classic pasta recipes: for example, spreading parmesan cheese and garlic butter over roasted squash or tossing the strands with cream and egg for squash alfredo. For an Asian-style salad, chill the cooked vegetable and combine the strands with soy sauce, ginger, garlic, sesame oil, lime juice, scallions and broccoli. For a twist in presentation, serve the squash dishes in the shell.

Preparing winter squash sometimes daunts even the most seasoned chef. Most recipes require winter squash to be boiled, baked or microwaved ahead of time. To boil squash, remove the skin with a vegetable peeler or paring knife, cut in half, scoop out the seeds and coarsely chop the flesh. Cook the squash as you would potatoes—bring the water to a boil, drop the chopped squash into the water and cook for about 10 to 12 minutes, until the squash is tender. Drain the squash in a colander and cool under running water.

To roast squash, cut the squash in half, remove the seeds and place the squash flesh side down in the pan with about one-half inch of water. Bake at 375° for 40 to 50 minutes, or until the flesh is tender. Squash can also be microwaved in 10 to 15 minutes.

Winter squash are easily pureed into creamy bisques and sauces. The basic puree consists of a savory combination of squash, onion, ginger, garlic and fresh herbs. The smooth texture of pureed squash also inspires a variety of pies, muffins and ice creams. Nuts and dried fruit make tasty accompaniments to squash desserts. Pumpkin-nut muffins, butternut squash–date bread, and acorn and rum-raisin ice cream will make splashy appearances on the dessert menu.

WEST INDIAN SQUASH BISQUE

Serves 6 to 8

Ingredients:
1 Tbs. butter
1 medium-sized onion, diced
1 cup celery, diced
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 chili pepper, seeded and minced (optional)
1 Tbs. fresh ginger, minced
4 cups calabaza, pumpkin, butternut or acorn squash, peeled and diced
4 cups water
2 cups coconut milk
¼ cup rum
1 Tbs. cumin
2 tspns. ground coriander
1 tspn. thyme
½ tspn. ground allspice
½ tspn. salt
½ tspn. black pepper
¼ tspn. white pepper

Method:
In a large saucepan, melt the butter. Add the onion, celery, garlic, chili pepper and ginger. Saute over medium heat for 5 to 7 minutes, until the vegetables are soft. Place the pumpkin and water in the pan and cook for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Reduce the heat and add the coconut milk, rum, cumin, coriander, thyme, allspice, salt, and black and white pepper. Cook for another 5 to 7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the soup is steaming. Transfer the soup to a food processor fitted with a steel blade and process for 15 to 20 seconds, forming a bisque. Pour immediately into soup bowls.

—Courtesy of Jay Solomon
Jay's Cafe at Clinton Hall

Nutritional information per serving:
301 calories, 4 grams protein, 24 grams carbohydrate, 22 grams fat, 240 mg. sodium, 5 mg. cholesterol

Versatile winter squash can be made into light fritters and pancakes, can be tossed with rice pilaf, and can be added to stews or stuffings. Acorn, buttercup and kabocha squash can be halved, baked, and stuffed like a potato.

Buying and merchandising

Choose winter squash that feel heavy, with firm skin that is free of blemishes or tender spots. Winter squash can be stored in a cool, dry and well-ventilated area for several weeks. Once cut, however, the squash should be refrigerated and used within a few days.

Merchandising squash is easy when the specific squash is mentioned in the name of the dish. Calabaza squash bisque sounds more appealing than squash soup, and chicken with butternut-squash puree is more enticing than squash sauce. As always, it's a good idea to introduce the dish with mouth-watering descriptions: savory, salubrious, succulent, sensual—well, you don't have to go that far.

Squash are no longer waiting by the phone for a call, any call. The time for squash to join the team of nouvelle cuisine has come. ❑

PUMPKIN RICE

Serves 6 to 8

Ingredients:
2 Tbs. butter, melted
1 onion, diced
2 cups pumpkin, calabaza, butternut or acorn squash, peeled and diced
1 chili pepper, seeded and minced
4 to 6 garlic cloves, minced
1 Tbs. fresh ginger, minced
2 Tbs. curry powder
1 tspn. cumin
½ tspn. ground clove
½ tspn. ground allspice
½ tspn. black pepper
½ tspn. salt
4 cups water
2 cups rice
2 cups fresh kale or spinach, chopped

Method:
Add the butter, onion, pumpkin, chili pepper, garlic and ginger to a saucepan and saute for 7 to 10 minutes, or until the vegetables are soft. Add the seasonings and simmer for 1 minute more.

Add the water, rice and kale, and simmer over medium heat for 25 to 30 minutes, or until the rice is fluffy. Serve immediately.

—Courtesy of Jay Solomon
Jay's Cafe at Clinton Hall

Nutritional information per serving:
363 calories, 8 grams protein, 72 grams carbohydrate, 5 grams fat, 242 mg. sodium, 10 mg. cholesterol

Jay Solomon is the chef and owner of Jay's Cafe at Clinton Hall in Ithaca, New York.

AFTERNOON T·E·A

Brewing up new business for the late-afternoon lull

by Melanie A. Crosby

As hot summer days fade into the crispness of fall and winter, nothing hits the spot quite like a steaming cup of afternoon tea, topped off with a taste (or several tastes) of something sweet. Soothing orange pekoe, smoky Lapsang Souchong or spicy Darjeeling may be the perfect recipe to warm the day and quell those late afternoon hunger pangs.

This time-honored tradition of afternoon tea—a tradition of scones and cream, china pots and silver spoons—has been enjoyed in Britain for generations, and America is now taking a liking to it as well. Foodservice operators are beginning to cash in on this growing taste for tea. Many have discovered the rewards of offering afternoon tea, filling empty seats as well as customers' empty tummies. Traditional tea time (usually between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.) is traditional restaurant downtime.

The tea tradition

It was not until the late 1700s that the taking of afternoon tea became fashionable. In 18th-century England, breakfast was large and hearty, lunch was small, and dinner was served late in the evening (around 8 or 9 o'clock), especially during the longer days of summer. Anna, Duchess of Bedford, is credited with launching the afternoon tea "habit." She would grow hungry in the late afternoon and, with supper still hours away, would order up a pot of tea along with breads, cakes and tarts to tide her over. The Duchess soon invited her friends to share her small repast, and afternoon tea became *de rigueur* for ladies of society.

One tea-time note: Afternoon tea should not be confused with "high tea." Although equally British, the evening event is a much different kind of repast. The heartier high tea includes not only sweets and tea, but hot, savory dishes and meat and fish offerings. Just as elegant afternoon tea became fashionable with the upper classes, high tea found favor with the working classes. Served later in the day (around 5 p.m. or 6 p.m.), it was (and is) often the biggest meal of the day after a hard day's work.

Hotel teas concentrate on correctness

Four Seasons Hotel in Philadelphia began serving afternoon tea when it opened in 1983. Served in the intimate Swann Lounge, tea takers can overlook fountains from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

The hotel's spokesperson, Ruth Hirshey, describes the Four Seasons' tea as elegant, sophisticated and "very correct. It's much more British than American in style," she says. "Proper service is vitally important."

Tea tables are dressed with Swiss lace cloths and fine British china. The tea's three courses include finger sandwiches, fresh warm scones (plain and currant) with rich Devonshire cream, and a selection of pastries, in-

Courtesy of Thomas J. Lipton Company

cluding "wonderful fruit tarts," which Hirshey claims are a highlight of the tea service. All items are made fresh daily in the hotel's own pastry kitchen.

At Four Seasons, the staff concentrates on educating customers about the manners and myths of afternoon tea. "We especially stress the difference between afternoon tea and high tea," says Hirshey.

Correctness and propriety are also important at the elegant afternoon tea served at The Cincinnatian Hotel in Cincinnati. The hotel began offering its tea three years ago with great—and continuing—success. "It's gotten to the point where you have to have a reservation to guarantee getting tea," says Anne Keeling, director of marketing for The Cincinnatian.

At this 149-room European-style hotel in downtown Cincinnati, afternoon tea is served in the Cricket Lounge every weekday afternoon from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. The service is based on the elegant afternoon tea served at The Dorchester Hotel in London. The Cincinnatian's fixed-price ($9.50) tea includes selections in each of the traditional three courses: three miniature tea sandwiches, two currant scones or tea breads, and two sweets (tea cookies, miniature tarts and pastries), plus a pot of freshly brewed loose-leaf tea. Service and setting are proper and elegant. Silver sparkles on tables, and classical guitar music lingers in the background.

Although the spread is quite British in flavor, the hotel's executive chef Anita Cunningham blends the traditional with a contemporary American twist, filling sandwiches with sumptuous delicacies such as smoked salmon and dill mousse, or cucumber and herb cream cheese. "The culinary effort for afternoon tea is very similar to that of a team of artists; we make items as appealing to the eye as they are to the taste," says Cunningham.

Restaurants take an informal turn on tea

Although traditionally afternoon tea can be quite formal, some restaurant operators have discovered that it doesn't always have to be. They have

loosened the constraints a bit, without losing the manners or the mystique.

Anglers & Writers, a small neighborhood restaurant in New York City's West Village, has found a comfortable niche between elegant formality and comfortable casualization. "We serve the same [type of offerings] as the British, but I hate the formality of proper British tea," says co-owner Craig Bero. "This is very informal and relaxed. We're very American about it." Each table is allowed an hour and 45 minutes per seating, giving tea takers ample time for relaxed, lingering conversation as afternoon turns into evening.

Tea at Anglers & Writers is served daily between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. for a fixed price of $10 (quite a bargain by New York City standards). The three courses and a pot are a hearty helping, making this tea more of a meal than an afternoon snack. "This is not a dainty tea," says Bero. "It's an early dinner, and it's a good value for the price."

The first course consists of "scones of the day," which vary with the seasons. Midsummer menus may include currant scones; fall is more likely to bring pumpkin scones. The fresh scones are served with homemade preserves, sweet butters and clotted cream. Bero scorns the "hockey puck" scones other restaurants may serve; at his cafe, scones are baked in 10-inch pie pans and cut into wedges. "Our customers are served wedges of scone at least 3 inches high," he says.

Anglers & Writers' second tea course is the traditional sandwich plate—with a twist. Offerings may include such offbeat delicacies as goose pate on toasted sourdough or Scandinavian seafood salad on homemade dill bread. Sandwiches are served open-faced in the Danish style.

The third and final course is, of course, reserved for the sweet tooth and often takes the form of cookies. "It's usually whatever we happen to have that day," says Bero, "but it always includes shortbread and a lemon square."

At Anglers & Writers, as at the more elaborate hotel teas, tea accompaniments and serviceware are vitally important to the total experience—and they are just as eclectic as the menu. The restaurant serves crystallized rock sugar instead of granulated, as well as wildflower and cherry blossom honey instead of processed honey. The repast is served on mismatched antique German and English china that Bero has collected over the years, and all doilies and tea cosies that decorate the tables are made by hand.

"Americans are not that familiar with tea service," says Bero. "We have to spend time on it because we're educating our customers. We pay special attention to the little things." Those little things include using a special filtering system that brings the water as close as possible to spring water, which, with its balance of minerals, brews a perfect pot of tea. Bero is careful to heat the pots first, then adds the tea, and then just-boiling water. The leaves are steeped just long enough to maximize the flavor. Tea takers are also presented with a second pot of water to dilute their tea as they please.

The Willson Walker House restaurant in Lexington, Virginia, has also found a nice niche between British formality and American comfort. This 90-seat upscale restaurant located in a restored colonial home in a small Southern town serves tea only on Wednesday afternoons between 3 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Chef Esther Durham describes the Willson Walker House's afternoon tea as "more American than British, more casual and relaxed." Tea service is set up in the foyer of the grand

> "We've taken a dead time and turned it into one of our most lucrative time periods."
> *—Craig Bero*
> *Anglers & Writers*

Brewing a perfect pot

The details of style and taste are very important to a successful afternoon tea service. Nothing is more central to that service than the tea itself. Here are some tips to keep in mind when brewing a pot.

1. Start with cold water. Let the water run for a bit before filling the kettle. This increases the water's oxygen content, which brings out the tea's flavors.

2. Heat the water just to boiling. Overboiling results in a loss of oxygen and can produce flat tea. Water that has not yet boiled may not be hot enough to open the tea leaves enough to produce high flavor.

3. Warm the pot. A cold teapot will cool the water on impact, reducing flavor. You can warm the pot by flushing it with a little hot water. Empty that water, place loose leaves in the warmed pot, pour just-boiling water over the leaves to fill the pot, and cover.

4. Allow the tea to steep just long enough. Tea should be brewed for 3 to 5 minutes, depending on the size of the leaves. Too little time will result in weak tea, as the leaves are not given a chance to open completely and release their flavor. Too much time can produce bitter tea due to the release of tannin.

5. Avoid aluminum or tin teapots. Metallic teapots can give the tea a metallic taste and may taint the color.

6. Add the milk first. If customers take their tea with milk, the milk should be poured into the cup before the tea. This may make it difficult to determine the right amount, however. Use milk rather than cream or half-and-half, as these heavier dairy products can cover up the flavor of the tea.

7. Provide a second pot of hot water. This allows patrons to dilute their tea to suit their own tastes.

house. Patrons are seated by a hostess and offered their choice of tea or coffee. The afternoon's sweet treats, which vary from week to week, are laid out on gleaming silver trays, and customers can help themselves to as much as they wish. Offerings may include scones with an assortment of jellies, mini-muffins and cookies, all made by Durham.

Turnaround for downtime

These afternoon tea spreads may seem elaborate and expensive, but operators see it as a relatively simple way to bring in customers during the late-afternoon lull.

"Afternoon tea makes effective use of that in-between time when nothing much else is going on," says Four Seasons' Hirshey. The hotel tea, she says, "plays to a very appreciative audience" and serves an average of 30 people per day.

Bero claims he started his afternoon tea specifically to combat that slow afternoon period and has had great success. "We're constantly bustling here, and people will stop by and say, 'What's going on?' We've taken a dead time and turned it into one of our most lucrative time periods." Although the hot summer months are a little slower, during the season his small restaurant (15 tables seating 45) serves tea by reservation only, and it's booked solid. "You have to call several days in advance to get in," he says.

Anglers & Writers' tea often serves to introduce clientele to the other benefits the restaurant has to offer. "Our tea is a great form of advertising," says Bero, who has zero dollars in his advertising budget and is proud of it.

Afternoon tea is also relatively easy to develop and can be done inexpensively. Bero incorporates elements from his existing menu in lighter versions, and the service staff is already on the job. "During that downtime, the staff is usually just sitting around. Afternoon tea lets you use the staff you have on hand," says Bero.

Durham has her own strategy for making afternoon tea cost-effective. "We do only one day, self-service," she says. "Limiting the choices to one or two types of cookies and sandwiches can also eliminate the chance for a lot of waste."

Anne Keeling cautions that an elaborate tea may not be particularly inexpensive to offer, because it takes so much time to make the intricate miniature tea sandwiches and elegant pastries. She believes, however, the extra effort and expense is worth it. "We don't make a profit on it," she admits, "but it does bring in many different types of customers."

"We see businesspeople bring in clients for tea instead of lunch."

—Anne Keeling, The Cincinnatian Hotel

More than just ladies of leisure

Although afternoon tea was once believed to be the domain of middle-aged ladies of leisure, today's tea-time patrons are quite a varied breed.

Four Seasons' Hirshey says, "We get everyone from proper ladies in hats to family groups to business suits and briefcases." Bero's West Village clientele is also quite varied. Many health-conscious customers, he notes, are attracted to afternoon tea as opposed to coffee houses or happy hour.

Afternoon tea is also becoming appropriate for business meetings. "Tea is an afternoon outing," says Hirshey, "but it can also be a good time to talk business." The Cincinnatian's Keeling notes a definite upswing in business meetings over a pot of tea. "We see businesspeople bring in clients for tea instead of lunch," she says. "It's a cheaper alternative, of course, but it's also quieter, more relaxed. We see many creative types, such as advertising agents and their clients, holding business meetings over tea."

Many customers turn to afternoon tea to celebrate special occasions as well. Keeling says that baby showers have become common at the hotel's tea. "People may want to have a party but don't want to drink alcohol. They see tea as a nice alternative," she says. Durham says the Willson Walker House regularly plays host to a group of teachers on Wednesday afternoons after school. Four Seasons' afternoon tea has become popular for wedding showers, which can be set up in a private room with enough notice. "We also see more and more small receptions with tea service," says Hirshey, "such as a law firm welcoming a new associate."

Expanding afternoon tea

The growing popularity of tea receptions and parties has prompted some operators to sponsor their own promotions in conjunction with afternoon tea.

Four Seasons sponsored a children's tea this past Christmas season called "Tea Time in Wonderland." The tea was structured around an Alice in Wonderland theme and featured a local ballet troupe performing excerpts from the *Nutcracker* in addition to tea and goodies.

Christmas also means extended tea service at The Cincinnatian Hotel, due to the "larger number of people downtown for shopping and such," says Keeling. The hotel also organizes cross-promotions. A recent success involved Laura Ashley, the women's fashions retailer. The event combined afternoon tea with a fashion show to launch the retailer's new spring collection. "It was so popular that we're probably going to do it again with the fall collection," says Keeling.

Afternoon tea can be customized to include the best your restaurant has to offer in style, cuisine and service. If done right, afternoon tea can give your customers a relaxing break on a busy day and your business a pleasant boost on a slow afternoon. ❑

Melanie Crosby is managing editor of ***Restaurants USA.***

BOOKSTORE CAFES

Writing a new chapter in restaurants

by Jennifer Batty

Some restaurants are offering their customers something new to nibble on: words. Across the country, the bookstore cafe, a marriage of food for the soul and food for the body, is attracting customers to the unique atmosphere created by joining the two concepts.

Bookstore cafes exude an inviting warmth: the rich smell of books mingling with the aroma of food, the chance to nestle in a corner table with a cup of coffee and a book, or the chance to browse through the bookstore after contenting your stomach.

Not every bookstore cafe has a happy ending, and even the success stories hit a plot twist now and then.

Kramerbooks & Afterwords Cafe in Washington DC.

Chapter one: A tale of two concepts

The idea of opening a bookstore cafe had been brewing in Bill Kramer's mind since he was six or seven. When he was a child, his family would take weekend trips that included a stop in Baltimore, where his father would visit friends in the bookstore business. One of the those bookshops made a big impression on the young Bill Kramer.

"Peabody's was this dusty old bookshop with sawdust on the floor. In the back they sold sausages and beer. The owner set up the beer parlor in the back during the Depression," says Kramer. "I was very taken with the atmosphere there; it was always a treat for us to go to Peabody's."

This experience was "set on back burners bubbling away" in Kramer's mind until 1975 when he became one of the owners of Kramerbooks & Afterwords, a combination bookstore and restaurant in Washington DC.

Even though he was realizing a childhood dream, Kramer knew there were risks. "The only risks involved were those inherent in opening two of the most bankruptcy-prone businesses," he says dryly.

The operation has been packed from day one and remains that way. "We attract a broad clientele. Everybody feels at home. A lot of people end up here when they're out on dates or have friends in from out of town," he says. In fact, business is so good that Kramer plans to move into a larger building that will triple the business's current space.

"Actually, the combination of the bookstore and the cafe cancelled some of the risks involved in the two operations. It gave people multiple reasons to come," says Kramer.

Rupert LeCraw, president and owner of Oxford Books in Atlanta, had heard of operations with both a bookstore and a restaurant component, including Kramerbooks, and liked the idea. "It appealed to me because if you can get people into the store and offer them food and drink, it helps them relax and keeps them in the store longer. In the process you hope they'll buy books as well," says LeCraw. He opened up Oxford Books and the Cup and Chaucer Cafe about 10 years ago, and he added the Oxford Espresso Cafe to another bookstore location a year and half ago.

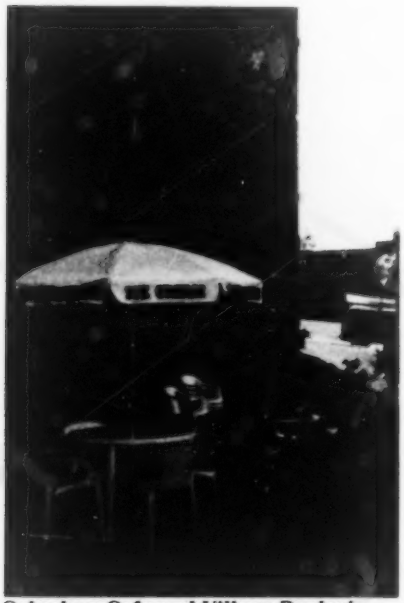
But he also learned that there were many glitches involved in running the combo. "Operating a bookstore and operating a cafe are completely different tasks. I would tell people in the bookselling business who are considering adding a cafe to decide whether they want the extra headaches," says LeCraw.

Chapter two: Great expectations

Despite the headaches, adding a restaurant onto a bookstore can boost business. "I thought adding a cafe might be a good way to change us into a unique place," says Marsha Berman, owner of Cover to Cover Bookstore Cafe in Columbia, Maryland.

Business doubled in her 10-year-old bookstore when the 50-seat cafe opened in 1988. "It seems that anybody who comes into the cafe goes into the bookstore afterwards," says Berman.

When the Colophon Cafe opened adjoining Chuck and Dee Robinson's Village Books in Bellingham, Washington, the bookstore saw an immediate increase in nighttime business. "Business went up 10 percent, then it shot up 40 percent and it's kept growing ever since the cafe opened," says Chuck Robinson. "It brought our regulars back here more often and drew in new people. Some people



Colophon Cafe and Village Books in Bellingham, Washington.

Davis-Kidd Booksellers and Second Story Cafe in Nashville, Tennessee.

come in to browse and go over for lunch. Then they'll come back one night for coffee and remember a book review they read, so they'll come over to the bookstore. It works out well, because the restaurant's best time for business is not necessarily the same as the bookstore's."

Chapter three: To own or not to own

"I knew from the start that the ideal situation would be to have someone else own and operate the cafe, someone with experience in the foodservice industry," says Robinson of Village Books.

Taimi and Ray Dunn were friends of the Robinsons who had previously operated pizza parlors and were looking for something "more fun." When the space beside the bookstore opened up in 1985, Robinson approached the Dunns, and they agreed to handle the restaurant half of the operation. The Dunns moved in next door, punched a hole through the connecting wall, and the Colophon Cafe was born. The Dunns own the restaurant outright.

"The way that we've done this suits our needs," says Robinson. "We aren't involved in the managing of the cafe; and they aren't involved in the bookstore. We have completely different staffs on each side. I would not have any interest in coming in and deciding what kind of soup we're going to have. I'm interested in books," says Robinson.

Communication is important when the operations are run by two different owners. "If you have two separate owners, nail down together what you want your staff to look like and act like. If you have one side's staff in tuxedos and the other's in jeans, you've got a problem. Customers don't like to be confused," says Taimi Dunn.

Diane Minor, who is now manager of the Second Story Cafe in Davis-Kidd Booksellers in Nashville, Tennessee, was previously human-resources manager for the bookstore for two years. She had prior experience in foodservice because she ran a catering business for a year. Upon taking the cafe position, she hired an assistant manager with a foodservice background to assist her.

The switch so far has worked out fine. "Both are a form of retail, but if you've bought food, you can't return it. Books you can. It is just a different style of retail," says Minor. The staffs for the bookstore and the cafe remain separate "unless we get into real trouble, and then we might ask them to help us, which they're quite willing to do," says Minor.

Chapter four: Books are not to be tasted

What type of food goes well with a good book or with shelves full of books? Foods that aren't fried, first of all. "We can't have anything that will emit substances that can get into the books—like fryers. We don't have a grill or a stove. We just have an oven for baking," says Colophon Cafe's Dunn.

When the Colophon Cafe first opened, the menu consisted of ice cream, dessert items, bagels, muffins and coffee. "People kept asking us to make lunch items, and that's when my husband Ray began making soup," says Dunn.

Ray Dunn began making one-pot soups, such as African Peanut Soup, and now the cafe has five different kinds of soup simmering in 12 pots each day. It also employs three bakers who bake all night long and produce pies, cakes and breads that are displayed in glass cases in the cafe.

Afterwords in Washington DC does not have a "real" kitchen, says Kramer. There's no hood or open flame, yet the cafe has progressed from soup and sandwiches to a full menu with fish and meat items.

"The atmosphere of the bookstore cafe seems to lend itself to bistro-style food," says Minor. "We attract professionals, students—generally an older, well-educated crowd that is eating healthier."

LeCraw has found that his customers also prefer lighter, simpler meals like soups, salads and quiche. The menu at Cover to Cover's cafe shows the California style of cooking, with the emphasis on nutritional foods. The Colophon Cafe also offers sandwiches, salads and other light fare.

Chapter five: As you like it

Bookstore cafes range from operations that give equal space for each concept to those that have only cozy nooks for an eating area or those that allot a smaller area for the book browsers.

Kramerbooks operates within a 1,000-square-foot space, while the cafe (including outdoor seating and an atrium) has 2,500 square feet. At Village Books and the Colophon Cafe, the bookstore has 6,000 square feet and the cafe 3,000. The 1,900-square-foot Second Story Cafe is nestled in a corner of the 18,000-square-foot Davis-Kidd bookstore.

The size of the restaurants reflects their purpose in the overall operations, say the owners. "The cafe was added as a complement to the bookstore. It does better than break even—we're in the black—but we were never expected to be the prime money-maker," says Minor of Second Story Cafe.

On the contrary, both sides of Kramer's operation are expected to pull their weight. "There are times when one does better than the other. They were created to run as separate profit centers, and they are about even in terms of revenue," says Kramer. In 1990, Kramerbooks & Afterwords took in $2.5 million.

Luring customers from one side of a bookstore cafe to the other is not too great a challenge, say the owners, since the browsing atmosphere of the bookstore and the aromas wafting from the cafe naturally encourage cross-flow. But to emphasize the close association between the two, Berman holds book events like author signings and book discussion groups in Cover to Cover. She has worked book-related names into the menu as well, like Moby Dick Tuna Sandwich and the Sherlock Burger.

Minor uses her experience in the bookstore to think up creative promotions for the Second Story Cafe. She has held author signings and cookbook signings, with menu specials prepared from recipes in the cookbooks. Books are kept in the cafe for customers to read, and *New York Times* book reviews are available on the tables. Flyers on the tables tell people what new books are in the bookstore.

The cafe caters to young readers by sponsoring breakfasts with Madeline and the Berenstain Bears. "We have people dressed up like the characters who read the stories to the children. We've had 100–150 people turn up for these breakfast events," says Minor.

Dunn says that giving the staff members of both Village Books and the Colophon Cafe some knowledge about how the other half operates helps to encourage customers to cross the dividing line. "We give the bookstore staff 30 percent off on our food so they are able to talk intelligently about the food. Our staff gets 30 percent off in the bookstore, so they become familiar with the bookstore and can point customers to an area where a book might be located. Or they can offer an opinion about a book they just read," says Dunn.

With all the back and forth, how do the owners deal with the issue of books wandering into the cafe and food finding its way into the bookstore? "It's never been a huge issue. We have a sign posted telling people to purchase books before taking them into the cafe, but it's never been a big problem," says Kramer.

"We've never discouraged people from walking around with coffee cups or food in the bookstore. We just ask them to be careful," says Robinson of Village Books.

Customers are encouraged to take books into the Second Story Cafe whether they have bought them or ever intend to buy them. "People sit down with their coffee and read the books, and they might decide to buy four books instead of two after looking them over. We encourage people to linger and read," says Minor.

Lingering over a cup of coffee and a book is fine for slow times, but during the afternoon or evening rush, cafe operators may have to give dawdlers a gentle push.

"We're so busy now that people don't feel comfortable reading for a long time and tying up a table. Sometimes when we're busy, we'll seat people together to allow them to read longer while others still make use of the table. But we will ask them politely to leave if they aren't buying anything and they have been using the table for a long time," says Dunn.

Chapter six: The right stuff

"Bookstore cafes are a very hot idea at this point, but you need to research the idea carefully. You can't just jump into it," says Robinson of Village Books.

Location should be a big consideration when deciding to open a bookstore cafe, says Kramer. "We chose Dupont Circle [a fashionable neighborhood in Washington DC] because it has a high density of daytime office traffic and a high density of residential traffic. You have to know the dynamics of the neighborhood when you move in, and that will guide your choice of menu items as well as books," says Kramer.

Adequate capital is also a must before venturing into the bookstore cafe industry. "It would be very wise for someone interested in opening a bookstore cafe to make a trip to a successful operation. Talk to the owners and have them give you the start-up costs and tell you about the unexpected expenses they have incurred," says Minor of Second Story Cafe.

"Things always look easier than they are. All you have to do is look at the number of restaurant failures—and then right behind them are bookstores. It seems like absolute folly to put the two together," says Robinson. "But if you can package the idea correctly, you have two of the things that people will never tire of doing: eating and reading." ❑

THE END

Jennifer Batty is a communications specialist at the National Restaurant Association.

CONDUCTING MEETINGS

Stuart Armstrong

Do you and your employees waste time in meetings that aren't productive when you should be making beautiful music (or food) together? Maybe you need to brush up on the fundamentals of conducting meetings. And maybe you don't need some of those meetings at all.

by Wolf J. Rinke

When I ask foodservice managers to name their biggest time wasters, I'm almost always told: meetings and paperwork. If you, too, have the problem of wasting time in meetings, then this article is for you. You'll learn how to structure meetings and what specific strategies to use to make your meetings more productive.

Do we need this meeting?

Before you start any meeting, always begin by asking, "Do we need this meeting?" and, if so, "What is the purpose of this meeting?" The answer to the first question is frequently a resounding NO.

One foodservice organization that I have been associated with for years conducts a staff meeting every morning, Monday through Friday. It starts at about 8 a.m. (unless the boss is late) and usually is over by about 9 a.m. (unless the boss has something more urgent to do or has what he thinks is a neat story to share with the group). The irony is that it doesn't matter how many or how few things need to be discussed or how critical the issues are, the meeting almost always takes one hour. Also, the truly important or complex issues are often brought up at the end of the meeting. In that case, quite a bit of time is spent discussing the issue, the time runs out, and everyone departs with the boss saying something like, "Let's talk about it some more" or "Let's all work on this." Sound familiar? If it does, then you already know that neither instruction will result in action.

Furthermore, if you ask any of the participants why the meeting was conducted, you would get a variety of answers, with at least one person telling you, "We always have a daily staff meeting" or "We have always done it this way." As a result of having spent a considerable portion of my working life in meetings (too many meetings), I know that this pattern is not at all unusual.

Meetings should be the exception, not the rule. But how many are too many? I think that a good rule of thumb is that if you spend more than 20 percent of your time in meetings, you or your organization has a problem.

Just to set the record straight, I don't believe that meetings are bad per se. In fact, they can result in many positive outcomes, such as

- □ enhancing team spirit
- □ sharing the organizational vision
- □ improving information flow
- □ gaining greater accuracy in communication
- □ increasing participation
- □ generating greater acceptance and ownership of ideas

Unfortunately, meetings, compared to individual decision-making, memos, telephone calls and other strategies that require only one or two individuals, also have some disadvantages. Most meetings are

- □ expensive
- □ time-consuming
- □ habit-forming
- □ disruptive
- □ ineffective
- □ unproductive
- □ boring

Before the meeting

Let's assume that you have already determined that a meeting is the best way to accomplish what you need to do.

First you must figure out who should attend the meeting so that you can accomplish the purpose efficiently and effectively. My experience has taught me that most meetings have too many, instead of too few, attendees. But how many is too many? That depends on the type and purpose of the meeting. If the purpose is information-sharing, then all those who must have firsthand knowledge should be present. The importance of the information to be disseminated will also help you decide. If the information affects people personally and their correct understanding is critical to the organization's welfare, then I would plan on firsthand dissemination instead of relying on the grapevine. Case in point: when you must lay off a certain number of your employees. On the other hand, if the information is nice to know, such as the news that new dining room furniture is being purchased, you need have only the first-line supervisors attend, because they can disseminate

the information in their meetings; any misinterpretations will not have any serious consequences.

If the purpose of the meeting is to generate innovative ideas on how to better serve your customers, then the more attendees the merrier. However, once you have come up with lots of ideas and are ready to select the best alternative, it is time to restrict your group size to those who are critical in the implementation process—ideally, five to seven people. If you have a problem that needs fixing, then only those who can help fix the problem should be at the meeting.

Next you have to determine the agenda. Hold on, I can hear you groaning. Yes, I do believe in agendas. I make one up for every meeting. Do I make up a formal agenda that is distributed in advance for every meeting? No. In other words, if you are conducting an informal staff meeting, you should know what it is you hope to accomplish and should relate that to all the attendees as the first order of business. In this case you would not need to write it down for advance distribution. But if it is an important meeting, or a meeting of an organization that meets only infrequently, it is the only way—well, at least the most direct way—to travel.

The agenda should, if possible, be sent out in advance and include as a minimum the following information:

- ☐ title of meeting
- ☐ objectives
- ☐ date
- ☐ location
- ☐ starting and ending times

In the body of the agenda you should include the following information about each item:

- ☐ start/stop time
- ☐ description
- ☐ presenters
- ☐ material to be reviewed in advance
- ☐ expected outcome

The last item, which basically addresses why we are bothering to talk about this and what we want to come up with, is the most important item in the agenda.

During the meeting

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into meetings, here come some more instructions. Well, who ever told you that being a winning foodservice manager was going to be easy? Actually, running the meeting is the fun part. The analogy that I like to use is that of conducting an orchestra. Well, maestro, let's see what you need to do to get everyone to make music together.

Start and stop the meeting on time. You can tell that this one is important. Winning foodservice managers know that it is important to reward positive behavior. If B.F. Skinner can teach pigeons to dance, you can certainly teach your team members to act in accordance with your expectations.

When you start a meeting on time, you are telling the attendees that you value your time and theirs and that you are here to conduct some important business.

When you wait for latecomers, you are punishing those who knocked themselves out to make it to the meeting on time. At the same time, the stragglers get rewarded because, as soon as they walk in, the meeting starts. You are also sending the message that you are running a country club. The bottom line is that this behavior and perception will pervade the entire meeting and, beyond that, the entire organization. So, whenever you ask anyone to give you a part of their valuable life, start and stop on time.

Maintain a positive, enthusiastic, energetic climate. Meeting climates are not born, they are made, and you as the meeting leader create the climate. Our perceptions are our reality. So, during your next meeting, be enthusiastic. Some of your people will leave the meeting with positive feelings; some will even be excited.

Do first things first. The rationale for this rule is that people get tired. So, while everyone is fresh, get the heavy-duty stuff out of the way first. Leave the nice-to-have information for the end.

Stick to the agenda. I know that Jim likes to chat, but your job as the conductor is to get everyone to make music together, not just listen to Jim. Stick to each portion of the agenda. I know that's tough. After all, what do you do when you come to a controversial, complex or sensitive subject? Refer it to a committee. That's right. Get a subgroup to volunteer to work on it, outside the meeting. You see, big groups—those larger than nine people—don't lend themselves well to this kind of stuff. So do everyone a favor, and don't work on Mission Impossible.

Summarize. Conclude the meeting by highlighting the positive accomplishments of the group. Even though you thought that Jim and Mary were going to kill each other during the meeting, make sure that everyone leaves on a positive note. Also, make sure that everyone clearly knows who will do what by when. None of this "let's all work on it" business. It doesn't work, it never has, it never will. If you need to meet again, don't forget to establish the next meeting time and place.

After the meeting

Distribute minutes. You must distribute some sort of written statement that clearly establishes who will do what, when and where. If you don't want to call this piece of paper minutes, be my guest. By the way, do it as soon as possible after the meeting and don't forget to have the action person report back to the group, or at least to you. If this is a very important meeting or a formal organizational meeting, you'd better keep minutes, or you'll regret it later.

Evaluate. You may wish to conduct a formal evaluation, which means you do it on paper and send the results to the person above you in the organizational hierarchy. If the majority of the attendees feel that the time spent in the meeting was not worth the cost, figure out what to change so that the next meeting is more cost-effective and productive.

And remember, nothing prolongs a meeting as much as hard heads and soft chairs. ❑

Wolf J. Rinke, Ph.D., is president of Wolf Rinke Associates, Inc., a training and management consulting company in Rockville, Maryland. *This article was excerpted from his book* The Winning Foodservice Manager: Strategies For Doing More With Less. *Copyright 1990 by Wolf J. Rinke.*

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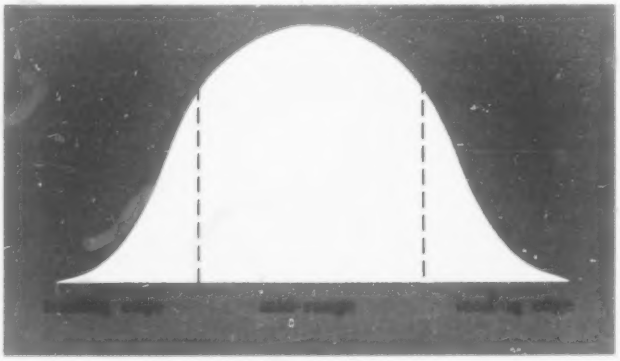
How to be an ineffective leader

Most everyone is aware of the statistical concept known as "the bell curve." This is the concept that suggests that when any given group of people is measured for any given purpose, the distribution of results will form a curve that will indicate there will be a few people at the extremes (extremely good or extremely bad) and that the largest proportion of the group will fall on the up slope or the down slope of a middle range. The curve resembles a bell—hence its name—and it looks like this.



If we apply the concept of the bell curve to the concept of leadership, we know that there are strong, responsible leaders; there are "average" or middling leaders; and there are weak, ineffective leaders. You really need to be thankful that these weak, ineffective leaders exist, as that causes you to be spotted to their right on the curve, and it's desirable to be as far to the right on the curve as you can be when leadership qualities are measured. Well, of course, considerable attention has been paid to how to be an effective leader, but there is not much in the literature about how to be an ineffective leader. After all, you have to have people in the bottom half in order for the top half to be possible. In the spirit of redressing this imbalance, here are some solid principles that can help you become a truly ineffective leader.

1. Cultivate distrust. You can easily achieve this by being secretive and deceptive, by encouraging and spreading rumors, by telling half-truths and whole lies, by omitting information that should be included and by including information that should be omitted in various reports and presentations. You can create internal dissension and corporate intrigue by issuing contradictory statements, applying policies inconsistently, making rash and abrupt judgements, and fostering an organizational culture that places people at the bottom of the priority list.

2. Provide shortsightedness. Always do what is expedient, not necessarily what's right, and live and work for today, with a constant focus on the past. Resist change and don't pay attention to new technology, since the old ways are always the best ways. Prevent others from envisioning the future, as such exercises are whimsical, subjective and ephemeral. Avoid risk and fear the unknown. Reject suggestions for improvement and stay only with what you yourself can see, hear, touch, taste and smell. Never hire a consultant. Praise and reward organizational myopia.

3. Eliminate standards. Or never establish them in the first place. If you had standards and people met them, they were set too low in the first place. If you set them too high and people did not reach them, such lofty standards would be ignored and mocked. So just avoid the time and trouble of setting standards, training employees and monitoring for employee compliance. Instead of standards, erect barriers in all aspects of management, such as operations, quality assurance, communication and human resources. Barriers blunt initiative and progress, but can be made to look like standards for the sake of appearance.

4. Solve others' problems. Create problems if you have to, so you can demonstrate your competence at solving them. If they already exist, just wade right in, make a cut-and-dried fast decision (that shows decisiveness) and then move right on to the next problem. Your people will appreciate that, since they won't have to work things out for themselves, which will save them time, agony and stress. Don't delegate and don't hold others accountable. You are ultimately accountable anyway, so you might as well do everything yourself.

5. Be closed-minded and rigid. Realize that you got to that leadership position because you exhibited something, somewhere, somehow that no one else had at the time, and therefore your leadership position fell to you. That makes you special. Therefore, don't listen to subordinates (who are, by implication, not special), as they don't have the perspective or responsibility that you do. You are your own person, not to be influenced, cajoled or impacted by anyone else in your organization. If you think it, it's got to be right (and special). Allowing others to sway your thinking is a weakness, isn't it? Also, never change your mind, irrespective of changed circumstances or new information. You don't want a reputation of being a vacillator, do you?

6. Be authoritarian. However you got to your leadership position (elected, appointed, self-developed), your stature vests you with authority, be it from a legal decree, corporate charter, certification of an election, etc. Since you have authority, you must act like you have it and are using it. In short, you need to be an authoritarian in terms of management style. Forget all other theories, such as x, y, z, and all other buzzwords, such as participative management and consensus seeking. You don't want to be known as namby-pamby or wishy-washy, sensibly sensitive, conditionally compassionate or earnestly empathetic. Be ruthlessly authoritarian.

7. Be humorless. On occasion you have to step back a bit and get a larger view of the situation in its total context so you can be exceptionally critical of and derisively demeaning to your subordinates. Leadership (you) and followership (them) is ultra-serious business, and you can be exemplary in conveying this to your people if you are morose, furtive, suspicious, caustic and acidic. A smile can be misunderstood, but frowns instill fear in people and are always understood.

8. Take all credit and blame others. When things go right, take all the credit. After all, it's due singularly to your leadership. When things go wrong, disassociate yourself as fast as you can from the situation by making excuses placing the blame on others. By placing blame on as many of your subordinates as possible, you are really helping them, since it is in their developmental best interest to get the feel of pressure, heat and unfairness. That will toughen them up, and they will thank you for it. Appreciation should rise upwards in your organization, funneling it all toward you. Depreciation should run downwards in your structure, moving away from you.

Fisher's Law #121: If you follow these principles, you will be on a bell curve edge of leadership effectiveness (never mind which edge).

Higher expenses dampen full-menu restaurant profits

Restaurant profits were held down at full-menu tableservice establishments in 1990 by escalating expenses—especially payroll, benefits and occupancy costs. This special analysis focuses on establishments that participated in the National Restaurant Association Industry Operations Survey and that reported operating data for two consecutive years.

Total median payroll costs per seat at full-menu tableservice restaurants jumped 7 percent in 1990, according to a special analysis of the results of the 1991 National Restaurant Association Industry Operations Survey, conducted in cooperation with the national accounting firm Deloitte & Touche.

Median employee benefits expenses per seat grew by a similarly strong 7 percent. Occupancy costs were up a higher 8 percent. In comparison, total median sales per seat among full-menu tableservice survey participants increased 6 percent in 1990. Consequently, median restaurant profit as a percent of total sales edged downward slightly, from 4.7 percent in 1989 to 4.6 percent in 1990.

Payroll expenses grow

Among a restaurant's controllable expenses, which include payroll, benefits, advertising and repair/maintenance costs, payroll is the largest cost category. Between 1989 and 1990, full-menu tableservice survey respondents reported a 7 percent increase in median payroll costs per seat: from $1,597 to $1,708. On a ratio-to-total-sales basis, payroll expenses in 1990 captured 29.3 percent of the total full-menu tableservice sales dollar, up from 28.9 percent in 1989. It is likely that these higher payroll costs reflect an increase in the federal minimum wage that occurred in April 1990.

Costs of employee benefits, which includes employer Social Security (FICA) taxes on tips as well as workers' compensation and health-insurance premiums, also rose sharply between 1989 and 1990 at full-menu tableservice restaurants. In 1989, median benefits costs per seat were $196 (4.1 percent of sales), but advanced to $210 (4.3 percent of sales) in 1990.

Other notable expense changes reported by full-menu tableservice respondents between 1989 and 1990 include

□ *Increased advertising and promotion costs.* Full-menu tableservice respondents indicated that spending on advertising and promotion increased on a per seat and ratio-to-total-sales basis between 1989 and 1990. In 1989, median advertising and promotional costs were $98 per seat, but advanced to $110 per seat in 1990. In addition, median music and entertainment expenses per seat jumped 22 percent. These higher spending levels are probably related to the onset of the recession in 1990 and the heightened need to use advertising/promotions and music/entertainment to bolster business in an uncertain economic climate.

Survey respondents reported a 7 percent increase in median payroll costs per seat to $1,708 in 1990.

□ *Higher occupancy costs.* Restaurant occupancy costs, which include rent, property taxes and property insurance, continued to rise for full-menu tableservice operators in 1990. Median total occupancy costs per seat were $382 in 1990, up almost 8 percent from 1989. The median rent expense per seat advanced more than 7 percent during the same period, while both property taxes and property insurance costs posted gains: up 9 percent and 4 percent, respectively. Other restaurant taxes, which include personal property, municipal, franchise and capital-stock taxes, leapt 17 percent on a per seat basis for full-menu tableservice operators between 1989 and 1990.

□ *No change in administrative and general expenses.* Faced with other escalating controllable costs, full-menu

Percent changes in revenues and expenses at full-menu tableservice restaurants 1990 versus 1989

Total sales per seat increased 6 percent at full menu-tableservice restaurants

	Percent change*
Total sales	6%
Total cost of sales	5
Other income	2
Total income	1
Total controllable expenses	6
□ Payroll	7
□ Employee benefits	7
□ Direct operating expenses	−1
□ Music and entertainment	22
□ Advertising and promotion	12
□ Utilities	3
□ Administrative and general	0
□ Repairs and maintenance	6
Total occupancy costs	8
□ Rent	7
□ Property taxes	9
□ Other taxes	17
□ Property insurance	4

**All percent change figures are based upon median dollar amounts per seat and are not intended to be representative of or to set standards for the industry. Respondents providing two years of comparable data numbered 424. Number of respondents varies by line item.*

Source: National Restaurant Association, 1991 Restaurant Industry Operations Survey

tableservice operators took decisive cost-control action regarding their administrative and general expenses between 1989 and 1990. Included in this group of expenses are costs necessary to the operation of the business, such as postage, printing, telephone and commissions on credit-card charges. In 1990, full-menu tableservice operators reported median administrative and general expenses of $218 per seat, unchanged from 1989.

Success at controlling direct operating costs and administrative expenses helped operators mitigate the effects of higher payroll, benefits and tax expenses.

□ *Direct operating expenses edge downward.* Operators also acted to control direct operating expenses, which include costs involved in customer service, such as uniforms, tableware and linens, and flowers and decorations. In 1990, full-menu tableservice survey respondents reported a median direct operating expense of $320 per seat in 1990, down almost 1 percent from 1989. Operators' efforts to better control both their direct operating and administrative/general expenses in 1990 helped to mitigate the effect of higher payroll, benefits and tax expenses.

—Hudson Riehle

Designated-driver programs are popular

The concept of having a designated driver who does not drink alcohol has grown in popularity among Americans as a way of combating drunk driving. Designated-driver programs are rated more highly than measures that would hold servers and manufacturers responsible for drunk persons who drive.

A Roper survey conducted in February 1991 reveals that enthusiasm for the designated-driver idea is high and is gaining momentum among Americans. In rating a list of eight ways to cope with the problem of drunk driving, a substantial majority—71 percent—agreed that the designated-driver approach is an "excellent" idea, and 22 percent said it's a "good" idea. The 1991 survey shows a marked increase from the 62 percent who thought the designated-driver idea was an excellent one in 1989.

The designated-driver idea received especially high "excellent" ratings from college graduates, working parents with children, opinion leaders and residents of the Midwest and Western states. It was ranked at the top of the list of eight ways to cope with the problem of drunk driving among all demographic groups.

The second ranking idea, advertisements to encourage people to drink responsibly (when they drink), received an "excellent" rating from 48 percent of respondents—well below the 71 percent who found the designated-driver idea excellent. Nevertheless, a total of 81 percent rated running more such advertisements as good or excellent.

Other anti-DWI ideas that held much less appeal but were described as good or excellent by a majority of Americans include

□ random police roadblocks (69 percent)

□ holding bar owners legally responsible for serving someone who is obviously intoxicated (60 percent)

□ a ban on advertising of alcoholic beverages (52 percent)

□ holding private citizens legally responsible for serving an obviously intoxicated individual who is involved in a drunk-driving accident (50 percent)

Meanwhile, an overwhelming majority of almost 75 percent reject the idea of outlawing the sale of alcoholic beverages completely, although 20 percent would favor prohibition.

Americans blame drinkers for drunk driving

According to the survey, Americans primarily blame people who drink alcohol (rather than those who

Which groups are not doing as much as they should do to help solve the problems of drunk driving?

Group	Percent of 1991 respondents	Percent of 1989 respondents
People who drink	58%	57%
The liquor industry	48	51
The beer industry	43	44
The wine industry	43	42
Bar and restaurant owners	41	41
The advertising industry	33	27
The courts	31	37
The television industry	29	24
State and local governments	25	27
The schools	21	20
The radio industry	19	15
The insurance industry	19	21
The police	19	21
Newspaper and magazines	18	18
None	6	4
Don't know	9	5

Source: Roper Reports

Ratings of suggested ways to combat the drunk-driving problem

	Percent of 1991 respondents who rated the suggestion					Percent of 1989 respondents who rated the suggestion "Excellent"
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know	
Designated drivers who will refrain from drinking on an occasion where people gather to drink alcoholic beverages	71%	22%	4%	1%	1%	62%
Run more ads encouraging people, when they drink, to drink responsibly	48	33	10	8	2	49
Random police blocks to check for drunk drivers	34	35	14	14	1	29
Banning advertising of alcoholic beverages	28	24	20	23	2	31
Holding legally responsible a bar that serves alcohol to someone who has obviously had too much to drink and is subsequently involved in an accident while driving	28	32	17	20	3	25
Prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages at supermarkets, convenience stores and gas stations	26	21	17	32	4	*
Holding legally responsible a private individual who serves alcohol in their home to someone who has obviously had too much to drink and is subsequently involved in an accident while driving	21	29	19	27	4	21
Outlaw the sale of alcoholic beverages completely	11	9	10	64	6	*

** not asked*
Source: Roper Reports

serve alcohol) for not doing as much as they should to solve the problem of drunk driving. A majority of adults, 58 percent, think people who drink are not doing as much as they should to stop drunk driving, similar to the 57 percent recorded in February 1989.

It is notable that Americans who are politically and socially active, known in the survey as "opinion leaders," are much more inclined than the average to say that people who drink should do more to stop drunk driving. In fact, 77 percent of opinion leaders said so, but they are also more inclined to say that each of the remaining 13 groups cited should do more. Their response suggests that they are especially concerned about the drunk-driving problem and want to see it addressed throughout society.

Clearly, Americans recognize that individuals themselves need to solve the drunk-driving problem. Nevertheless, nearly half, 48 percent, say the liquor industry is not doing as much as it could, and 43 percent think the beer and wine industries could do more. Forty-one percent feel that bar and restaurant owners should do more as well.

Among all demographic groups, the designated driver was ranked at the top of a list of eight ways to cope with the problem of drunk driving.

Although little change in consumer attitudes regarding purveyors of alcoholic beverages has occurred in two years, Americans are increasingly concerned that the advertising and TV industries are not doing as much as they should to combat drunk driving. In February 1991, 33 percent said the ad industry should be doing more, up 6 percentage points from 27 percent in 1989. Similarly, the proportion saying that TV should do more increased from 24 percent in 1989 to 29 percent in 1991.

In contrast, Americans are less inclined to say the courts should be doing more: 31 percent said so in 1991, versus 37 percent in 1989.

—Susan Mills

A look at regional economies

Revised estimates of second-quarter gross national product indicate that the nation's economy is still in a recession. But the economic climate varies from region to region. The extent to which restaurant operators have been affected by this latest recession depends on their region's economy. This article examines how various parts of the country have been affected by the economic slowdown.

Recession is probably the word least liked by the government, the business world and consumers alike. Technically speaking, any period during which real (inflation-adjusted) gross national product (GNP) declines for two consecutive quarters qualifies as a recession. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, an independent nonprofit organization that is regarded as the determiner of recessionary periods, the nation officially entered the recession in July 1990. Recent revisions of the GNP indicate that the national economy continued to slide through the second quarter of 1991.

In examining this current economic downturn, it is important to point out a few differences between this recession and the two preceding ones: the recession of the late 1970s, which was characterized by double-digit inflation, and the recession of the early 1980s, characterized by double-digit unemployment. Unlike its predecessors, this recession does not show either double-digit unemployment or inflation. Through the first eight months of 1991, inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index advanced 4.8 percent above the first eight months of 1990. In addition, the Civilian Unemployment Rate,* although standing at roughly 6.8 percent for the nation through the first eight months of 1991, is nonetheless higher than the 5.5 percent level posted through the first eight months of 1990.

These statistics might cause some to wonder, "So what is the big deal? At least things aren't as bad as they have been in the past," which is correct. But the distinguishing characteristic of this recession is the substantial regional and even sub-regional variability in economic conditions.

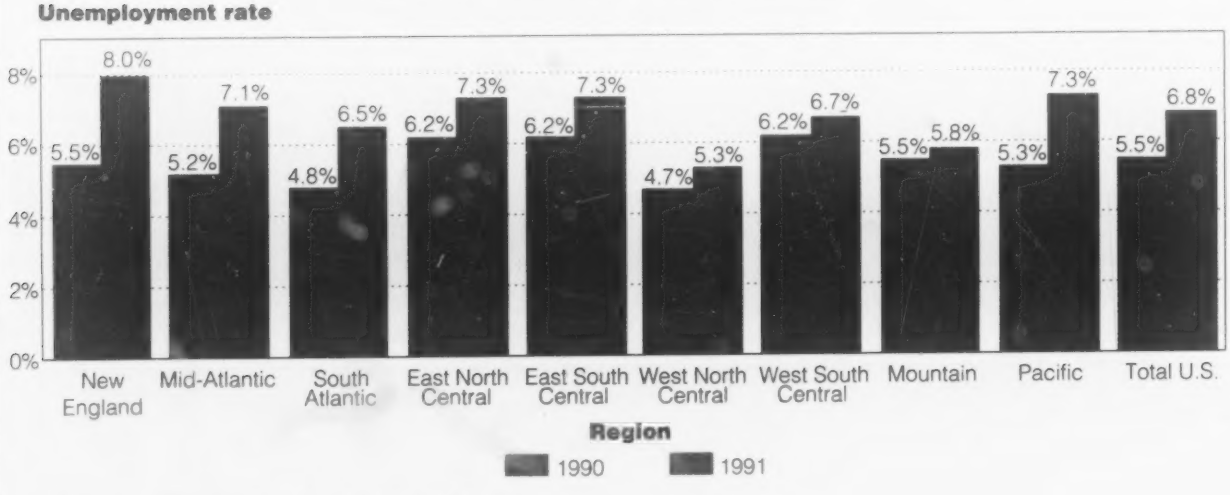
Generally speaking, the nation's Civilian Unemployment Rate is reported on a seasonally adjusted basis. However, since seasonally adjusted labor force and unemployment figures were not available by region, the rates given in this article are based on unadjusted figures.

Regional unemployment

The nation's jobless rate through the first six months of 1991 averaged just below 7 percent. But this rate is subject to great regional variance, as it ranges from a low of 5.3 percent in the West North Central region to 8.0 percent in New England.** Why the wide range? Much of it has to do

Civilian unemployment rates* by region, first 6 months of 1990 and 1991

Unemployment rates rose in every region in 1991



*Unemployment rate calculated using unadjusted figures

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Restaurant Association

with the industrial mix of each region.

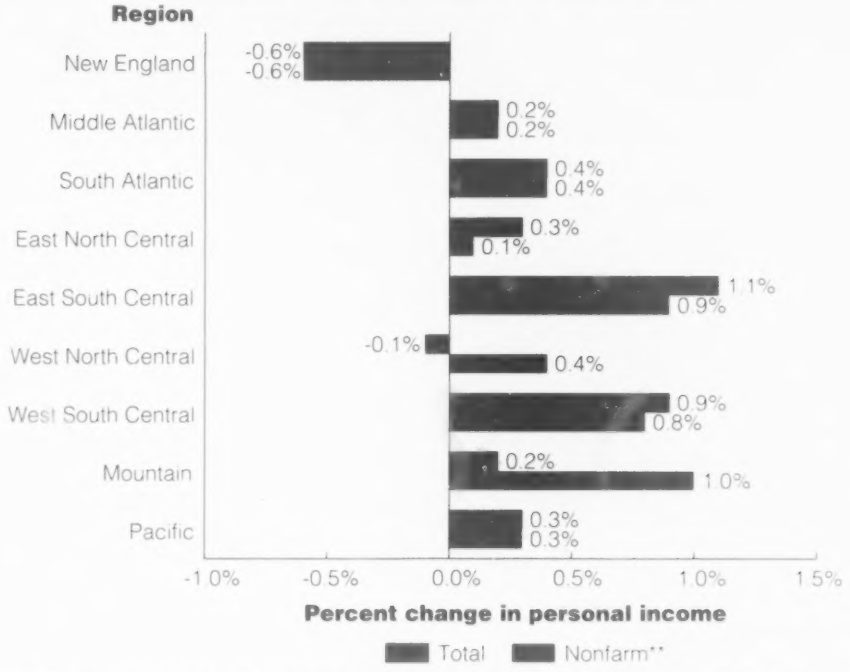
For example, the region with the lowest unemployment rate includes states such as Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska, which have a heavy dependence upon agriculture. The unemployment rates in these states tend to be lower because even in times of economic downturn, consumers still need to eat, and thus employment in the production and manufacturing of food products keeps employment from slumping. In contrast, much of the economy in the New England states (particularly in Massachusetts) is based on service industries such as finance, insurance and real estate. It is no surprise, then, that the softening of the real estate market in New England and down the East Coast has contributed to that region's slumping economy.

But the New England region is not the only one hard hit by slumping employment in financial services and related industries. The same is true in the Middle Atlantic states, most notably New York (especially New York City), where, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 14 percent of the employed population is employed in the financial services and real estate sectors. Large cities in other regions have also been affected by the downturn in the real estate market and the difficulties of many banking institutions.

But problems in the larger service industries have not been the major source of unemployment problems everywhere. The decline in consumer expenditures for durables such as automobiles and major appliances has caused plant layoffs and declining hours worked in manufacturing centers in the East North Central and East South Central regions, as well as in parts of the West South Central region, particularly Arkansas.

Percent change in personal income from fourth quarter 1990 to first quarter 1991

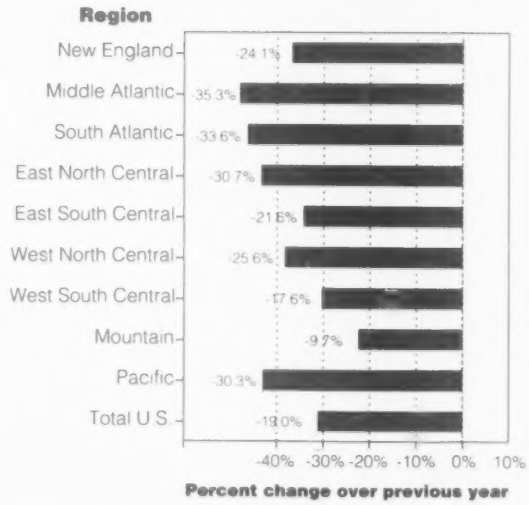
Personal income declined in 2 regions and grew at a sluggish pace in 5 others between the fourth quarter of 1990 and first quarter of 1991



*Personal income is defined as the total of wages and salaries plus dividends, interest and other labor income.
**Excludes earnings made on or by farms

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Percent change in overall consumer confidence



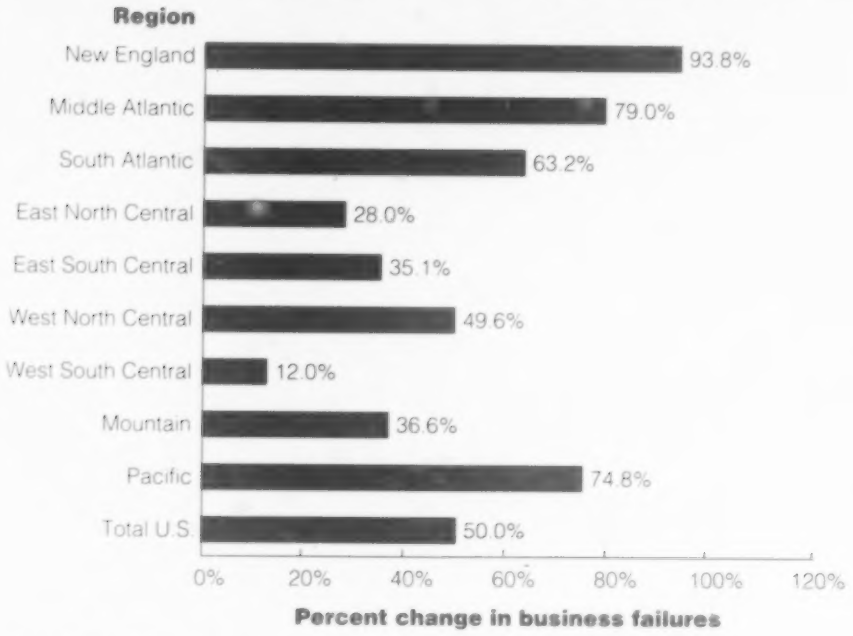
Note: *All changes are for first eight months of 1991 over first eight months of 1990.*

Source: Conference Board, National Restaurant Association

***The regions used throughout this article are those used by the Bureau of the Census and are broken down as follows:*
New England: CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT
Middle Atlantic: NJ, NY, PA
South Atlantic: DC, DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV
East North Central: IL, IN, MI, OH, WI
East South Central: AL, KY, MS, TN
West North Central: IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD
West South Central: AR, LA, OK, TX
Mountain: AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY
Pacific: AK, CA, HI, OR, WA

Percent change in business failures*

The rise in business failures was greatest on the East and West Coasts



*First 6 months 1991, compared with first six months 1991

Source: Dun & Bradstreet

The Pacific states, a haven for those migrating from the high costs and sluggish economies of the East in the late 1980s, have not gone unscathed by this downturn. Much of the unemployment in these states is coming as a result of U.S. Department of Defense cutbacks. High-tech industries, especially those in parts of Southern California, have been hard hit by these cutbacks. In addition, poor weather conditions (lack of rain) have hampered much of the state's agricultural industry.

Personal Income

Higher unemployment means a greater number of consumers with diminished income. According to the July *Survey of Current Business*, a report by the U.S. Department of Commerce, personal income (the total of all wages and salaries plus dividends and interest income and other labor income) advanced a meager 0.3 percent between the fourth quarter of 1990 and the first quarter of 1991—the smallest increase in 20 years. Nonfarm income (a somewhat better measure of performance due to the high degree of variability in farm income) also grew only 0.3 percent in the first quarter of 1991 from the fourth quarter of 1990, down from a 0.9 percent advance between the third and fourth quarters of 1990 and a 1.5 percent rise between the second and third quarters of 1990. Much of this decline is directly attributable to the rise in unemployment.

A look at personal income by region shows a strong tie between personal income growth and regional unemployment. In New England, the region with the highest unemployment rate, personal income actually declined 0.6 percent between the last quarter of 1990 and the first quarter of 1991. In contrast, the Mountain states, which recorded the second lowest unemployment rate, had the largest advance in nonfarm personal income: 1.0 percent.

Consumer confidence

In addition to a decline in income, unemployment also causes uneasiness among consumers. Concern about present or future employment and income may have the same psychological effect as actual unemployment. Consumers are hesitant to spend when they are concerned about not having a job in the future.

The Conference Board's Consumer Confidence Index is derived by asking individuals how they feel about both current and future (6 months from now) economic conditions in terms of business conditions, employment, availability of jobs and income.

Of all economic indicators, perhaps the best indicator of regional economic variability is regional consumer confidence. In New England, the region that many economists say has experienced the worst economic conditions, total consumer confidence declined 24 percent during the first eight months of 1991 compared with the first eight months of 1990. The "present situation" element of the index dropped a remarkable 93 percent over the same period. On the positive side was a 32 percent rise in the "expectations" index.

Although the drop in confidence was most evident in New England, none of the nine census regions posted an increase in confidence, and all but one region posted a double-digit decline in total confidence during the first eight months of 1991. Likewise, all nine regions recorded double-digit drops in "current situation" indexes, as increased unemployment in all regions has more consumers concerned about their employment situations.

In looking ahead to the remainder of 1991, New Englanders are the most optimistic, probably because many feel that the situation in their region cannot get much worse. The only other region to post an advance in expectations during the first eight months of 1991 (compared with the first eight months of 1990) was the Pacific region. Although the remaining seven regions recorded declines in their expectations, the declines are much smaller (ranging from 1.6 percent to 14.7 percent) than the declines in the "present situation" indexes. This indicates that a sense of optimism may be close at hand. If expectations in these regions rise, consumers may be more eager to spend and thus may spur regional economic growth.

—Nancy Michalski

Americans are ordering more pizza

No matter how you slice it, pizza has become a restaurant mainstay. In 1990, orders for pizza at restaurants increased nearly 5 percent and were included in 13 percent of restaurant orders. Recently, orders for carryout and pan pizza have made significant strides.

Second only to burgers, pizza has become one of the most popular items ordered in the "main dish" category of food items at restaurants. According to CREST,* hamburgers/cheeseburgers were included in 17 percent of eater occasions** in 1990, dropping from 19 percent in 1987. Stealing the spotlight is pizza. Included in 12 percent of eater occasions in 1987, pizza grew to be included in 13 percent of eater occasions by 1990. Viewed another way, the number of pizza orders advanced 12 percent between 1987 and 1990, triple the 4 percent growth in total restaurant orders during that time. In 1990 alone, pizza orders jumped nearly 5 percent.

The thick and thin of it

Fueling the fire of pizza's popularity was pan pizza. In 1987, orders for pan pizza represented just 14 percent of all pizza orders, but by 1990, orders for pan pizza grew to capture nearly one-quarter (22 percent) of total pizza orders—representing an impressive 72 percent gain in orders between 1987 and 1990.

A special CREST study reveals that pan pizza is one of the fastest-growing menu items in several parts of the country. Between 1987 and 1989, orders for pan pizza advanced 76 percent in the South and 48 percent in the Midwest, ranking this pizza type as the second fastest-growing menu item in each region. However, despite pan pizza's gaining popularity, thin pizza remains the pizza of choice. In 1990, 53 percent of pizza orders were for thin pizza, 23 percent were for thick pizza and 2 percent were for stuffed pizza.

Although the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service does not track pizza consumption, per capita consumption of mozzarella cheese more than doubled between 1980 and 1989, reflecting the increase in pizza consumption. In 1989, Americans consumed 6.4 pounds of mozzarella cheese per person, up from 3.0 pounds in 1980.

Pizza restaurants

In 1990, fast food pizza restaurants captured one in five fast food restaurant orders, or 13 percent of total restaurant orders, according to CREST. The International Franchise Association estimates that in 1990 there were 21,954 franchised pizza restaurant units, representing $11.5 billion in sales. Compared with the estimated 19,243 franchised pizza restaurants in 1988 and $9.6 billion in sales, this concept posted dramatic gains in both the number of units and sales from franchised companies. Independent operators remain a strong force in the pizza market as well.

Customer counts at fast food pizza restaurants in 1990 were up 3 percent, following a 5 percent traffic gain in 1989. In comparison, total quickservice customer counts advanced a lower 2 percent in 1990 and 1 percent in 1989.

Delivery traffic slows

Off-premises consumption is a significant component of pizza restaurant business. In 1990, seven in 10 orders from fast food pizza restaurants were consumed outside the establishment, up 3 percentage points from 1987. This compares to about six in 10 of total fast food orders in 1990 that were consumed off premises. Driving the success of pizza restaurants, off-premises traffic at fast food pizza restaurants grew 14 percent between 1987 and 1990, compared with flat traffic growth in on-premises customer counts at these establishments.

However, delivery orders at pizza restaurants decreased slightly (1 percent) in 1990, after a 22 percent gain in delivery orders between 1987 and 1989. Still, delivery orders from pizza restaurants represented more than one-third (34 percent) of all off-premises traffic in 1990.

The 1990 gain in off-premises pizza restaurant traffic was fueled by carryout orders, which rose an impressive 10 percent. In 1990, carryout orders captured the majority of off-premises traffic at pizza restaurants (65 percent), while drive-thru orders accounted for the remaining 1 percent.

The majority of pizza operators offer a delivery service. According to a survey conducted by the National Association of Pizza Operators in 1991, more pizza operators said they offered delivery or planned to do so in the future, and fewer operators in 1991 charged a fee for delivery, compared with the previous year. Also, according to survey results,

Customer counts at pizza restaurants

In 1990, customer counts for carryout drove pizza restaurant growth

	1988–89	1989–90
On-premise traffic	6%	−3%
Off-premise traffic	5	6
Carryout	4	10
Delivery	8	−1

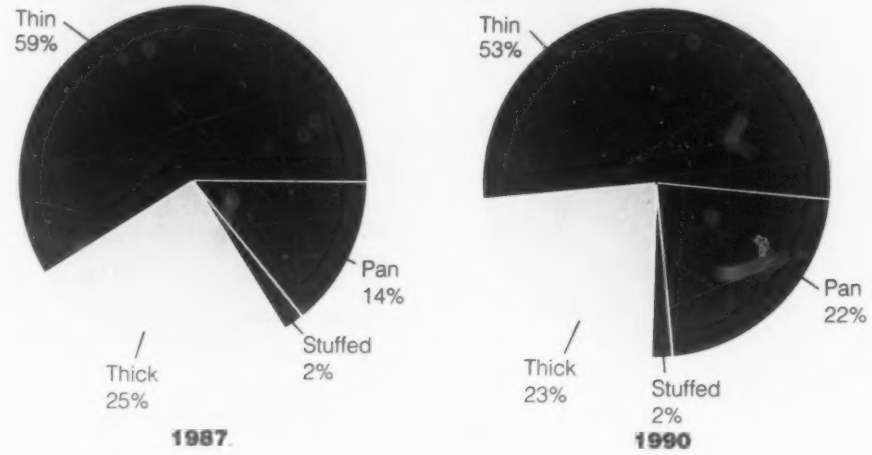
Source: *NPD/CREST Annual Household Reports*

**CREST stands for* Consumer Reports on Eating Share Trends, *a diary survey of one of the NPD marketing and research companies.*

***An eater occasion is one meal eaten by one person.*

Share of restaurant pizza orders by pizza type 1987 versus 1990

Pan pizza accounted for a larger slice of pizza orders in 1990 than in 1987



Source: *NPD/CREST Annual Household Reports*

more pizza establishments are backing off from a guarantee of delivery time.

Promotional use surges

Promotional usage is higher at pizza restaurants than at other restaurant concepts. In fact, in 1990 more than two in five orders from pizza restaurants involved some form of promotion. Moreover, this represents a dramatic increase from the past. In 1987, the use of promotions at pizza restaurants was a full 10 percentage points lower (32 percent), and in 1989 the deal rate was 36 percent. For fast food places, the deal rate in 1990 was a lower 23 percent.

Considering the high level of dealing, it is noteworthy that pizza restaurants have the second highest check size among fast food establishments. In 1990, the average check size per eater was $3.89 at pizza restaurants, excluding tips, compared with $2.88 for the total fast food industry. Only fast food Oriental places had a higher average check ($4.70). In comparison, fast food hamburger restaurants reported a lower average check ($2.55) in 1990.

One explanation for the higher check size at pizza restaurants is the propensity of consumers to order at dinnertime. In 1990, a dramatic 74 percent of orders at pizza restaurants were at dinner, 20 percent were for lunch, and 6 percent were for an evening snack. By comparison, in 1990 a smaller four in 10 orders in the fast food industry were at dinner. Also, weekends are a popular time to order pizza. In 1990, three in five orders at pizza restaurants occurred during the weekend (Friday to Sunday), compared with 52 percent for the fast food industry.

Kids account for large slice of orders

In 1990, customers aged 6 to 17 accounted for one in five pizza orders, and kids under 6 accounted for an additional 10 percent. In contrast, pizza was not so popular with the older crowd. Customers 45 years old and older placed just 17 percent of pizza orders.

Viewed another way, 21 percent of all orders from kids under 18 years included pizza, compared with 11 percent for patrons 18 and older. Pizza ranks third among food items included in kids' orders, surpassed only by hamburgers and by french fries. In 1990, hamburgers were included in 22 percent of orders for kids under 18, and french fries were included in 31 percent. A 1990 National Restaurant Association Gallup survey confirms pizza's popularity with kids: 15 percent of adults with children between 6 and 12 listed pizza as their child's favorite menu item.

Pepperoni reigns as king of toppings

An overwhelming majority of pizza operators report pepperoni to be the favored topping requested by customers. According to the National Association of Pizza Operators, in 1991 four in five pizza operators indicated pepperoni was their customers' first choice. Sausage ranked as the second most requested topping, followed by mushrooms. Anchovies was the least popular.

Gourmet toppings are gaining ground in some parts of the country. Such toppings include oysters, chicken, crayfish, dandelions, sprouts, eggplant, Cajun shrimp, artichoke hearts and tuna.

Mozzarella reigned as the most popular cheese on pizza. Nine out of 10 pizza operators surveyed reported using mozzarella on their pizza pies. About three in 10 offered provolone cheese; the next most popular was cheddar, followed by Parmesan, Romano, ricotta and Swiss. Nine in 10 pizza operators surveyed in 1990 said they used only "100 percent real cheese," down from the proportion who said so previously. Perhaps this decline is due to the increased interest in cheese alternatives for low-fat, low-cholesterol diets.

—Elizabeth Gordon

Recent upswing in cheese prices

After remaining flat during the first five months of 1991, cheese prices are on the upswing. Data from the National Cheese Exchange reveals that the wholesale price of cheddar cheese, a benchmark for other varieties, rose from $1.10 per pound in the beginning of May 1991 to $1.33 per pound by the end of August—a 21 percent increase. The recent cost increase can be attributed to lower milk supplies in the summer of 1991 due to extreme heat in the Midwest. Prices are expected to remain firm through the end of the year.

However, compared to previous wholesale cheese prices, 1991 prices were down. Cheddar cheese was $1.46 per pound at the end of August 1989 and $1.38 per pound at the end of August 1990, compared to $1.33 at the end of August 1991.

Foodservice Market Measure

August 1991

In August foodservice patronage held the ground it gained in July as 51 percent of adults reported they were foodservice patrons on a typical day. Although there are no figures for comparison from August 1990, it is worth noting that overall patronage this August is in line with last September's figure of 52 percent.

Of particular interest in August 1991 was the relative strength of on-premises patronage. Thirty-five percent of adults reported that they were on-premises patrons on a typical August day, a level second only to patronage in March, when consumer confidence soared as the Persian Gulf War ended.

Since posting a sharp gain in the spring, consumer confidence has been edging downward. Consumers' relatively low confidence about their current situation is indicative of a sluggish economy. Nevertheless, consumer expectations suggest that an improvement is coming.

Summer patronage

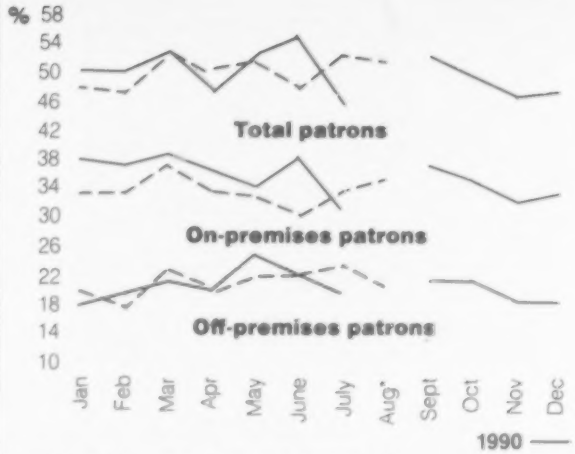
In the July–August summer months, 52 percent of adults were foodservice patrons on a typical day. Thirty-four percent ate a meal or snack on the premises of a restaurant, fast food place or other eating place, and 22 percent purchased food to go or had it delivered.

Males were more inclined than females to be foodservice patrons in July–August, but slight increases in the likelihood of patronage occurred for both sexes in the summer months, when compared with earlier this year.

Consumers who live in the Midwest and South were more likely than those living on either coast to be foodservice patrons in July–August. While the likelihood of patronage rose in July–August for those residing in the Midwest and South, it posted little change in the eastern and western regions of the country.

—Susan Mills

Percent of adults who were foodservice patrons



*No Market Measure was fielded in August 1990.

Source: National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey

Percent of adults who were foodservice patrons on a typical day

	January–June 1991	July–August 1991	Percentage point change
Male	52%	54%	+2
Female	47	49	+2
White	48	52	+4
Nonwhite	54	50	−4
Age			
18 to 24 years old	62	60	−2
25 to 34 years old	54	54	–
35 to 44 years old	51	58	+7
45 to 54 years old	49	50	+1
55 to 64 years old	42	47	+5
65 and older	34	37	+3
Income			
$40,000 or more	56	56	–
$20,000 to $39,999	47	52	+4
Less than $20,000	44	49	+5
Region			
East	48	49	+1
Midwest	49	54	+5
South	50	54	+4
West	50	48	−2

Source: National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey

Percent of adults who were foodservice patrons on a typical day

	January–June 1991	July–August 1991	Percentage point change
On premises	33%	34%	+1
Off premises	21	22	+1
Meal period			
Breakfast	6	6	–
Lunch	25	27	+2
Dinner	24	24	–

Source: National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey

Foodservice Market Measure

The Foodservice Market Measure is based on 1,000 telephone interviews, conducted by the Gallup Organization each month, with a nationally representative sample of adults age 18 and older. Each person is asked the same questions:

1. Which of the following did you do yesterday?

☐ Ate on the premises of a restaurant, fast food place, cafeteria or any other place where you purchased a meal or snack.

☐ Purchased takeout food "to go" or had it delivered.

2. Was the food you ate on premises yesterday for breakfast, lunch, dinner or a snack?

3. Was the takeout food you purchased or had delivered for breakfast, lunch, dinner or a snack?

The monthly tracking of purchases is supplemented by quarterly inquiries on topics of industry interest.

1 NEW ENGLAND

Location: Meredith, NH
Association members: Russell, Glenn, Lynn and Dale Hart
Operation: Hart's Turkey Farm Restaurant
Profile: Family restaurant
In business: 36 years
Seats: 550
Meals served: Lunch, dinner

In the mid-1980s, New Hampshire's economy was booming, unemployment was at a ridiculously low 1.6 percent and Hart's Turkey Farm Restaurant was flourishing. But, as co-owner **Russell Hart** explains, "things kind of fell apart on us a couple of years ago." Most area businesses, including the family-owned lakeside restaurant, are now being weakened by the rippling effect of the economic slide.

"No restaurant here is doing better in 1991 than in 1990," says Hart, who co-owns the restaurant with his brother and sisters.

In response to the economic slide, the Harts introduced a lower-priced children's menu and have held other prices down. Daily specials, couponing and sales contests among the waitstaff also work to increase sales.

"Our bottom line is still good," Hart explains. "You can still keep a stable bottom line by controlling your food costs and labor costs."

The area's unemployment rate of nearly 7 percent has actually helped the restaurant in one way: finding employees.

2 MID-ATLANTIC

Location: Pittsburgh, PA
Association members: John Del Pizzo, Marianne Giglio
Operation: Del's Restaurant
Profile: Midscale restaurant
In business: 43 years
Seats: 200
Meals served: Lunch, dinner

Ten years ago, Pittsburgh government closed a bridge that linked Del's Restaurant with the downtown business district. The move could have choked off the restaurant's lunch business or even forced the restaurant to shut down.

But, as owner **John Del Pizzo** explains, adversity was turned into advantage when Del's began a lunchtime delivery service to the business district.

Dinner business at Del's is slowly picking up again after a slow first half of 1991, but sales continue to run 2 to 3 percent behind last year. Pizzo says the introduction of early-bird specials has helped.

"The early birds are the only reason we're staying above water," says Pizzo. For $5.25, the early-bird special includes soup, salad, a choice of five entrees, a pasta side dish and ice cream.

3 SOUTH ATLANTIC

Location: Parkersburg, WV
Association member: James E. Colombo
Operation: Colombo's Restaurant
Profile: Midscale restaurant
In business: 37 years
Seats: 450
Meals served: Dinner

Consistently good food and quality service have helped this family restaurant show increased sales again this year. A variety of major companies nearby has helped stabilize the area's economy during the unsteady economic times.

"We greet our customers at the door and remember names. It's good business," says owner **James E. Colombo.** His 79-year-old father, **James B. Colombo,** opened the restaurant in 1954 and continues to be the main greeter, while matriarch **Anna Colombo** still watches over the making of her spaghetti sauce recipe in the kitchen.

The owner gives credit to a loyal waitstaff for the restaurant's fine service. Three waitresses have been at Colombo's for more than 20 years, while another 10 of them have worked between 10 and 15 years. The familiar staff has helped build a local following.

Colombo says the restaurant started as a small 55-seat family diner and "has gotten a lot bigger than we ever thought it would be." The restaurant has expanded five times during the past 20 years.

4 EAST NORTH CENTRAL

Location: Boonville, IN
Association members: Ray and Mary Rankin
Operation: Village Fireside Pizza
Profile: Family restaurant
In business: 13 years
Seats: 96
Meals served: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Pizza for breakfast? Not really. But residents of Boonville (pop. 6,000) are gradually catching on to the availability of a traditional breakfast at Village Fireside Pizza.

"It does make people wonder," says co-owner **Ray Rankin.** "Some people still think that the only thing we have is pizza, but they eventually find out about our breakfast after they've lived in town for a while."

Rankin says business at Village Fireside Pizza has been very good, as the town has avoided the economic problems that have plagued the coasts.

"I'm here to receive people and greet them," he says. "Public relations work keeps a good neighborhood crowd coming back. We know most of our customers by their first names."

The restaurant, located just east of Evansville, hosts a successful all-you-can-eat fish-and-chicken dinner on Fridays and Saturdays.

5 EAST SOUTH CENTRAL

Location: Louisville, KY
Association members: Howard and Tim Poole

Operation: Dizzy Whizz Drive-In
Profile: Curb-service eatery
In business: 44 years
Seats: 50 inside, 35 parking lanes
Meals served: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

In a year in which many Louisville restaurants were barely staying afloat, Dizzy Whizz Drive-In experienced an unexpected "tremendous" year in 1990, according to manager **Tim Poole.** Last year, sales increased by 20 percent.

"For some reason, the restaurant caught on last year," says Poole, who cannot explain any definite reason for the progress. Dizzy Whizz is again experiencing growth in 1991, but at a more modest 4 to 5 percent.

The restaurant features 50 indoor seats, including a 1950s-style counter that serves 10 people. He notes that Dizzy Whizz is the only curb-service establishment in Louisville.

"People like the novelty of a place like this," says Poole, whose father, **Howard Poole,** was the original owner.

6 WEST NORTH CENTRAL

Location: Des Moines, IA
Association members: Jim and Noah Lacona
Operation: Noah's Ark Ristorante
Profile: Casual Italian
In business: 44 years
Seats: 210 in dining room, 110 banquet seats
Meals served: Lunch, dinner

Business is growing at Noah's Ark Ristorante in both sales and number of meals served.

"I look more at the meals served [figures] to get an idea of how we're doing," explains co-owner **Jim Lacona.** "Because of price increases, sales figures will fool you. I don't think they give as accurate a view of traffic."

The restaurant features Italian foods and pizza, but also offers up steak and seafood. Noah's Ark jumped on the health-conscious bandwagon six years ago by introducing broiled chicken, fruit plates and cholesterol-free cooking.

Lacona says that people seem to be more cautious with their money these days, especially when it comes to the business lunch. "We're seeing less and less of the long lunch hour," he says. Tighter expense accounts and concern over alcohol liability, explains Lacona, have been two reasons for slower business traffic.

7 WEST SOUTH CENTRAL

Location: Shreveport, LA
Association member: Charlotte Anthony
Operation: Smith's Cross Lake Inn
Profile: Midscale dinner house
In business: 36 years
Seats: 140 in dining room, 200 banquet seats
Meal served: Dinner

"Up until 1982, we had never known anything but an increase," says **Charlotte Anthony,** owner of Smith's Cross Lake Inn. "That's not happening anymore. The streak is now going the other way: down."

Anthony says that when the oil business hit the skids in the early '80s, the economic fallout reached deep into other industries. Unemployment has reached 7.6 percent.

"You see the same people, but you just don't see them as often," says Anthony. "They all say the same thing: that they can't afford to come here every week like they used to."

Smith's has tried everything to increase traffic: remodeling, direct mail, adding pasta dishes and doing all the advertising they can afford. About four times each year, the restaurant serves meals to tour guides in hopes of increasing tourist business.

"We're lucky that our property, equipment and building are already paid for. If we had to pay rent every month, we couldn't make it," says Anthony.

Staffing is one of the few situations that has not been a problem at Smith's. The same five waitresses have been on staff since 1965.

8 MOUNTAIN

Location: Silver Springs, NV
Association member: Diannia Piper
Operation: Piper's
Profile: Casual restaurant
In business: 4 years
Seats: 40
Meals served: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Competition has again come to Piper's, as a second restaurant opened in Silver Springs in mid-August. Manager **Mandy Piper** says the return of competition has not affected business at the 24-hour eatery.

The restaurant, located 40 miles northwest of Carson City in a town of 2,500, is coming off an especially successful summer. A banquet facility for local clubs and organizations helps keep traffic consistent throughout the year. In addition, the restaurant sponsors street dances, outside barbecues, pool tournaments, live music and a road rally.

The family-run building also includes a beauty shop, office space, motel rooms and 15 slot machines.

9 PACIFIC

Location: Carmel, CA
Association member: Anton Salameh
Operation: Anton & Michel's
Profile: Upscale restaurant
In business: 12 years
Seats: 100 in dining room, 30 in lounge
Meals served: Lunch, dinner

A sluggish tourism season fueled by a poor economy kept sales down this summer at Anton and Michel's in Carmel. Co-owner **Anton Salameh** says that sales were off by about 6 percent compared with last year.

In response to the sales drop, the upscale restaurant has resolved not to increase prices on food or liquor. Salameh said he hopes to increase check averages by training the staff in selling procedures.

In addition, Anton & Michel's is increasing its advertising budget this year. A four-color brochure will be placed in local hotels and motels while the restaurant is being publicized in television commercials for the first time. "The TV ads are to remind the locals to come back. It's not really meant to reach the tourists," says Salameh.

The restaurant faces some stiff competition. Salameh says nearly 25 similar restaurants are located on the Monterey Peninsula, an area that includes the 80,000 residents of Monterey, Pacific Grove and Carmel.

—Pat DiDomenico

Only smoking

As consumer pressure mounts and no-smoking ordinances are passed, fewer restaurants are giving smokers a chance to enjoy an after-dinner smoke.

In California, for example, at least six cities have already banned smoking in restaurants, and legislation has been proposed to prohibit it statewide.

But there are a few flickers of hope for California smokers. Some restaurants are turning against the tide by introducing "Cigar Nights." At Ma Maison in Los Angeles, the first Monday of every month is cigar night, where patrons may puff as they please. Remi in Santa Monica also offers monthly cigar celebrations. And Remi in New York is carrying the trend to the East Coast as well.

—Food Arts

Marbled, but lean

A recent innovation from GFI America of Minneapolis seeks to put succulence and flavor into a lean-beef product, without the high fat and cholesterol counts. Known as SmartMeat, the beef is defatted but—believe it or not—well marbled.

This beef is drawn from grass-fed cattle that have not been fattened in feedlots. The original cuts from these cattle are tough, but low in fat and cholesterol. The super-lean meat is then transformed through a secret trademarked process known as "vacu-marbling."

The meat is skinned of external fat and then mechanically "fattened." This "fat" is a mixture of margarine, water, soy protein, salt and dextrose and may be present in the final product up to 15 percent. This margarine marbling gives SmartMeat the marbled look of standard meats.

—Los Angeles Times

Truck stop treasures

In classic truck stops of old, tired truckers would haul a rig in for a tank of diesel, order a blue-plate special (or maybe two), catch a few winks and hit the road again. But truck stops are changing, offering far more than a pump and a plate.

At Petro's new 30-acre truck stop in Florence, South Carolina, for example, truckers can visit the hair salon for a shave and a cut—or even a dye job. The Iron Skillet Restaurant in residence offers not only hearty food but telephones at every table. Other truck-stopping services include fax machines, TV rooms and ice cream shops. At Sapp Brothers truck stop in Omaha, Nebraska, and at Petro's in Kingdom City, Missouri, even doctors have opened up shop.

These new "stopping malls" for the driving life are beginning to attract motels and fast food outlets as well. A truck stop in Wheeler Ridge, California, hosts one of the nation's largest Burger Kings.

—USA Today

Basics for businesspeople

In their efforts to win business, hotels have gone after business travelers by offering them everything from in-room offices to exercise bikes. But according to two recent surveys, it's the little things that matter most—things that save time and say "welcome." Trendy amenities are of much less interest.

One survey of Ramada Renaissance Hotel customers revealed that the most convenient service offered to business travelers was a video or express check-out system. Other highly rated items were complimentary breakfasts, newspapers and in-room coffee makers—classic standards of hospitality.

An amenities survey turned up a less enthusiastic response for trendier hospitality offerings. Only 46 percent of guests were likely to use an in-room stationary bike, and a rental cellular phone interested only 19 percent of travelers surveyed.

—Ramada International Hotels & Resorts

Service under stress

Ever notice that your service staff looks a bit piqued, that the smile's a bit too strained or the skin a bit too pale? It could be the result of stress. A recent survey ranks waiting tables about as stressful a job as fighting fires.

The survey, conducted by *Men's Health* magazine, asked three job-stress specialists to rate stress levels (both physical stress and psychological stress) of various jobs. Factors taken into account included degree of danger, number of deadlines or quotas, competitive pressure and degree of control the worker had over results.

Cops and inner-city schoolteachers had the highest stress ratings, but restaurant servers fell not far behind, surrounded by such obviously high-stress positions as firefighters, medical interns, assembly-line workers and air-traffic controllers.

—Wall Street Journal

BRIDGE THE GAP

BETWEEN FOODSERVICE AND CONGRESS